Matthew Hayes

No. 1341
10p
AUS. N.Z. 40c

Commando

WAR STORIES IN PICTURES

INTO THE WOLF-LAIR!

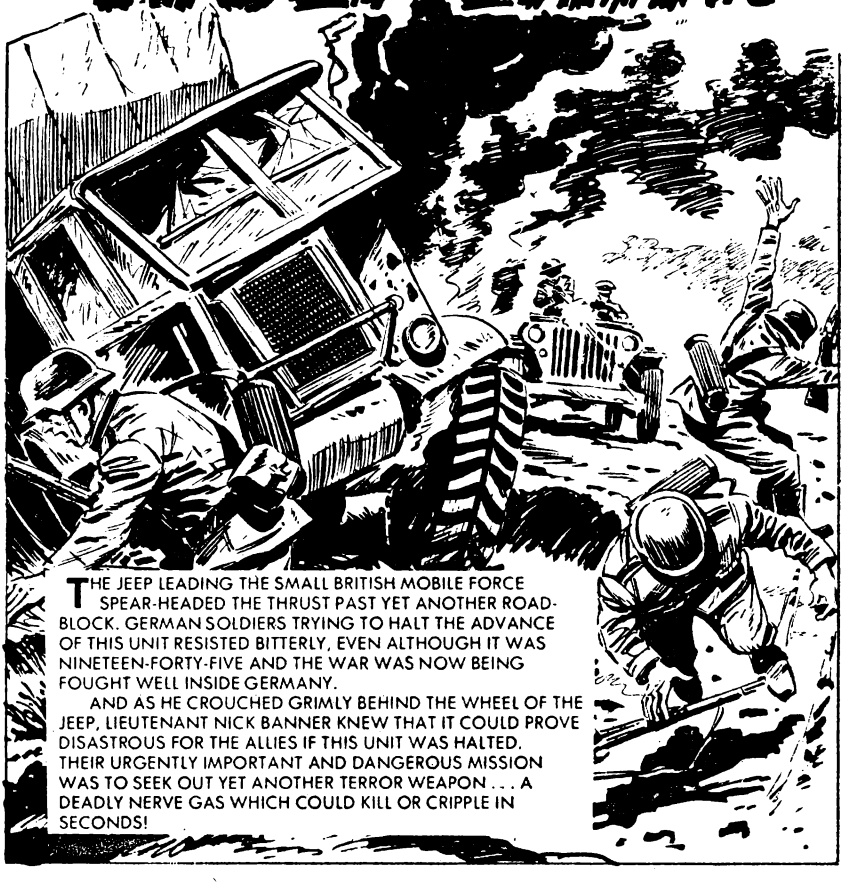
SPOT THAT CAR!

B.M.W. 633 CS

Over 120 m.p.h. isn't bad for a big, luxurious four-seat coupe! Yes, this beauty has sports-car performance, which is what you'd expect from the 3.3 litre fuel injected power plant. From 0 to 60 m.p.h. is 7.7 seconds, for example. With its very low profile and disc brakes all round, this is a very safe car to drive and is just what you would expect for around £17,000.

CHRIS Fleming

INTO THE WOLF-LAIR!



THE JEEP LEADING THE SMALL BRITISH MOBILE FORCE SPEAR-HEADED THE THRUST PAST YET ANOTHER ROAD-BLOCK. GERMAN SOLDIERS TRYING TO HALT THE ADVANCE OF THIS UNIT RESISTED BITTERLY, EVEN ALTHOUGH IT WAS NINETEEN-FORTY-FIVE AND THE WAR WAS NOW BEING FOUGHT WELL INSIDE GERMANY.

AND AS HE CROUCHED GRIMLY BEHIND THE WHEEL OF THE JEEP, LIEUTENANT NICK BANNER KNEW THAT IT COULD PROVE DISASTROUS FOR THE ALLIES IF THIS UNIT WAS HALTED. THEIR URGENTLY IMPORTANT AND DANGEROUS MISSION WAS TO SEEK OUT YET ANOTHER TERROR WEAPON . . . A DEADLY NERVE GAS WHICH COULD KILL OR CRIPPLE IN SECONDS!

NICK, AN EX-COMMANDO WHO HAD SEEN PLENTY ACTION, HAD BEEN POSTED TO THE INTELLIGENCE CORPS BECAUSE OF HIS FLUENT GERMAN, BUT HIS WAS NO OFFICE JOB. AND HIS SERGEANT, JOE KEMP, WAS ANOTHER VERY TOUGH CHARACTER WHO HAD SERVED WITH NICK IN SOME VERY TIGHT SPOTS.

YOU RECKON WE'LL GET THERE BEFORE THEY HAVE TIME TO BLOW THE PLACE UP, SIR?

I HOPE SO. WE'VE GOT TO FIND OUT FAST WHAT DEVILISH GAS THEY ARE MAKING.

THE POISON GAS LABORATORY WAS LOCATED IN THIS AREA OF VAST FORESTS, AND NICK HOPED TO GET THERE BEFORE IT COULD BE EVACUATED.

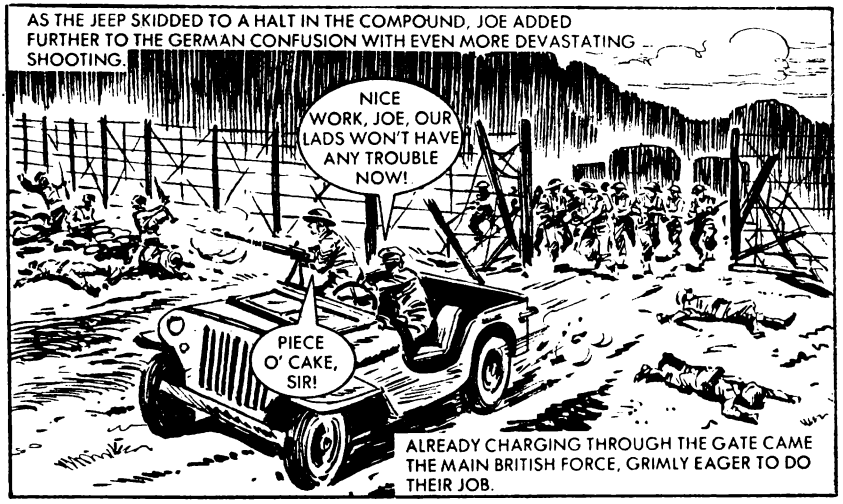
THEY WON'T EXPECT US TO BE SO FAR AHEAD OF THE MAIN FORCE, SO WE MIGHT CATCH THEM BEFORE THEY CAN GET AWAY.

WE'D BETTER KEEP OUR FINGERS CROSSED, THEN!

FIRST THEY CAME TO A PICTURESQUE QUIET LITTLE VILLAGE, BUT A BIG CAMP HAD BEEN BUILT JUST BEYOND ITS BOUNDARY, AND THE GUARDS SOON RECOVERED FROM THEIR SHOCK AT SEEING THE ENEMY APPEAR SO SUDDENLY.
HIMMEL, ENGLANDERS! SOUND THE ALARM!
THEY MUST HAVE COME THROUGH THE FOREST. I THOUGHT THE ROADS WERE BLOCKED!

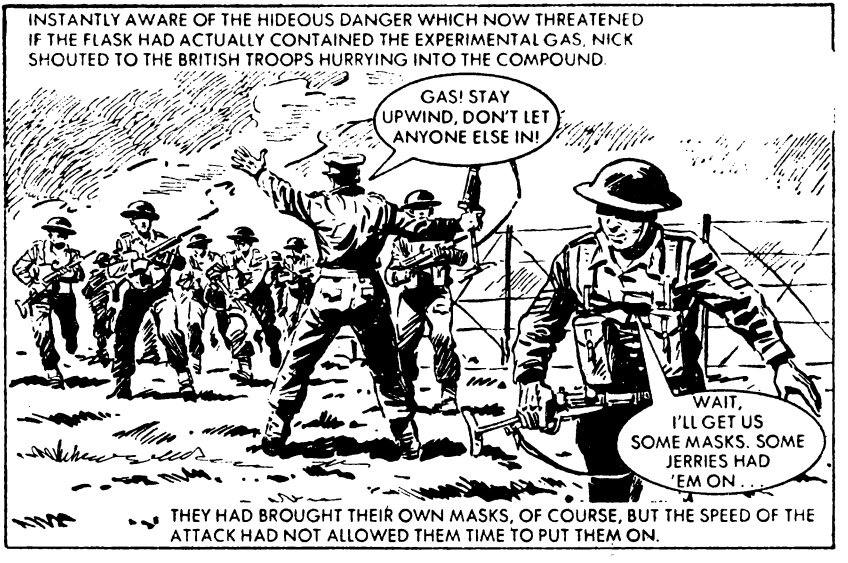
THE GERMAN INFANTRY GUARDING THE COMPOUND WERE TOUGH AND WELL-TRAINED. THEY FOUGHT BACK DOGGEDLY AS THE ATTACKERS MOVED IN, LED BY NICK IN HIS JEEP, FROM WHICH JOE POURED ACCURATE FIRE.
BY THE TIME WE GET IN, THE JERRIES WILL HAVE DESTROYED EVERYTHING. THEY MIGHT EVEN USE THE GAS ON US!
AND I BET THEY WOULD, TOO!

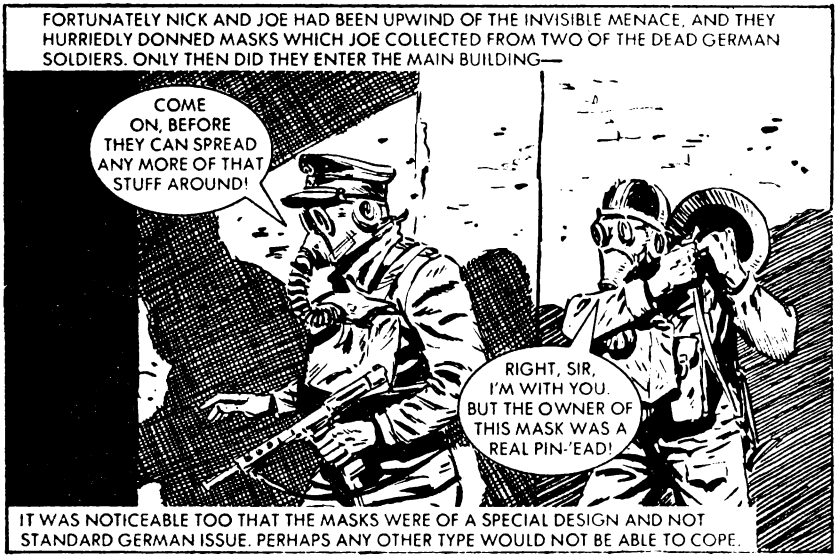
THERE WAS NO TIME FOR FANCY TACTICS. NICK DROVE HIS JEEP STRAIGHT AT THE MAIN GATES, SMASHING THEM OPEN SPECTACULARLY WHILE JOE HUNG GRIMLY ON THE MOUNTED MACHINE GUN, FIRING AT ANYTHING THAT MOVED.
AT LEAST WE'RE IN!
THAT'S THE WAY, SIR!

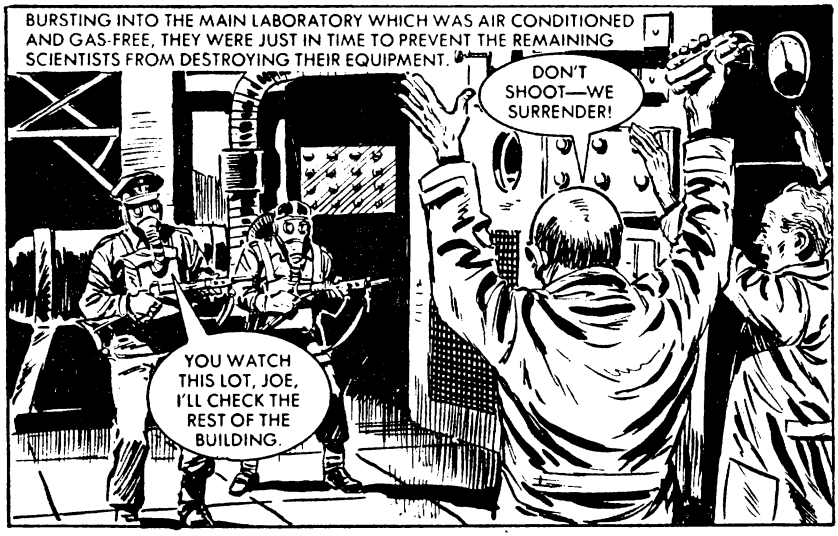

AS THE JEEP SKIDDED TO A HALT IN THE COMPOUND, JOE ADDED FURTHER TO THE GERMAN CONFUSION WITH EVEN MORE DEVASTATING SHOOTING.
NICE WORK, JOE, OUR LADS WON'T HAVE ANY TROUBLE NOW!
PIECE O' CAKE, SIR!
ALREADY CHARGING THROUGH THE GATE CAME THE MAIN BRITISH FORCE, GRIMLY EAGER TO DO THEIR JOB.

AS NICK LEAPT DOWN AND MADE FOR THE MAIN LABORATORY, A GERMAN SCIENTIST RUSHED OUT DEFIANTLY, A GAS MASK SHROUDING HIS FACE.
SCHWEIN . . . AAAGHH!
HE'S GOT A GRENADE!
NICK'S STEN CHATTERED SWIFTLY AND THE NAZI FELL DEAD.

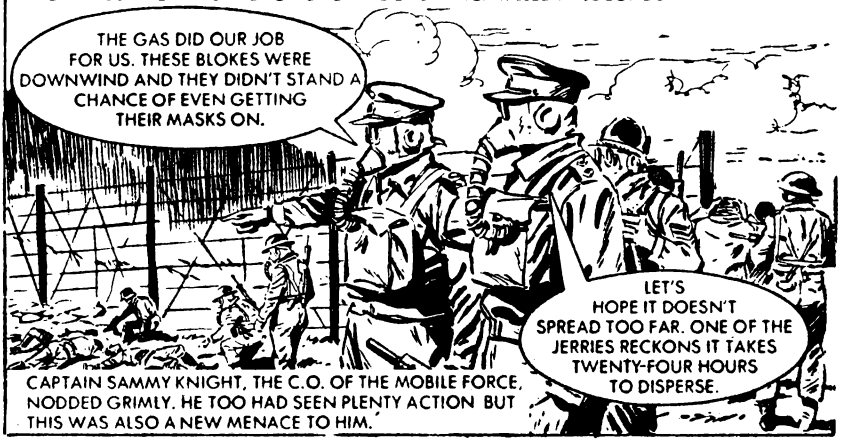
JOE AND NICK PRESSED FORWARD, BUT SOON SAW IT WAS NOT A GRENADE THE SCIENTIST HAD BEEN ABOUT TO THROW.
WAIT, THAT WAS A GLASS CONTAINER —AND IT'S SMASHED!


INSTANTLY AWARE OF THE HIDEOUS DANGER WHICH NOW THREATENED IF THE FLASK HAD ACTUALLY CONTAINED THE EXPERIMENTAL GAS, NICK SHOUTED TO THE BRITISH TROOPS HURRYING INTO THE COMPOUND.
GAS! STAY UPWIND, DON'T LET ANYONE ELSE IN!
WAIT, I'LL GET US SOME MASKS. SOME JERRIES HAD 'EM ON . . .
THEY HAD BROUGHT THEIR OWN MASKS, OF COURSE, BUT THE SPEED OF THE ATTACK HAD NOT ALLOWED THEM TIME TO PUT THEM ON.


FORTUNATELY NICK AND JOE HAD BEEN UPWIND OF THE INVISIBLE MENACE, AND THEY HURRIEDLY DONNED MASKS WHICH JOE COLLECTED FROM TWO OF THE DEAD GERMAN SOLDIERS. ONLY THEN DID THEY ENTER THE MAIN BUILDING—
COME ON, BEFORE THEY CAN SPREAD ANY MORE OF THAT STUFF AROUND!
RIGHT, SIR, I'M WITH YOU. BUT THE OWNER OF THIS MASK WAS A REAL PIN-'EAD!
IT WAS NOTICEABLE TOO THAT THE MASKS WERE OF A SPECIAL DESIGN AND NOT STANDARD GERMAN ISSUE. PERHAPS ANY OTHER TYPE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO COPE.


BURSTING INTO THE MAIN LABORATORY WHICH WAS AIR CONDITIONED AND GAS-FREE, THEY WERE JUST IN TIME TO PREVENT THE REMAINING SCIENTISTS FROM DESTROYING THEIR EQUIPMENT.
DON'T SHOOT—WE SURRENDER!
YOU WATCH THIS LOT, JOE, I'LL CHECK THE REST OF THE BUILDING.

THE REMAINING SCIENTISTS HAD NO WISH TO BE DEAD HEROES AND SURRENDERED WITHOUT RELEASING ANY MORE GAS. AND WHEN NICK AND JOE GOT OUTSIDE AGAIN, ALL THE BRITISH WERE WEARING GAS MASKS, BUT SOME UNFORTUNATE GERMANS BORE GRIM TESTIMONY TO THE POWER OF THE GAS WHICH KILLED IN SECONDS.



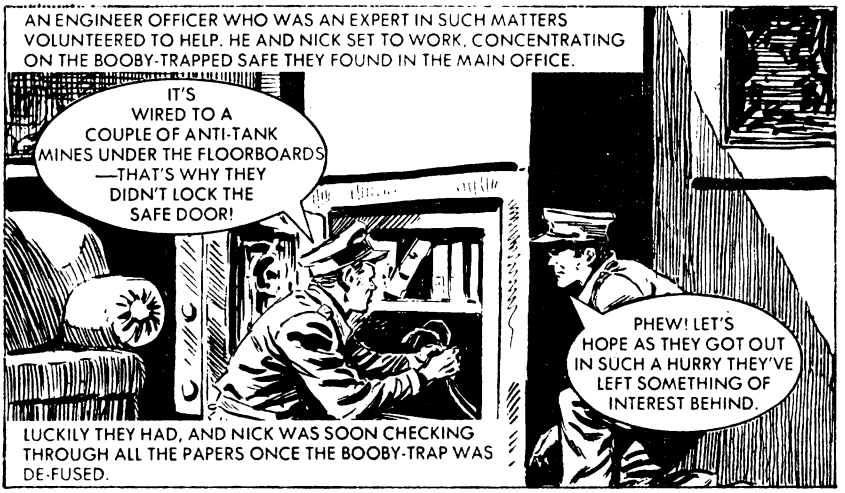
CAPTAIN SAMMY KNIGHT, THE C.O. OF THE MOBILE FORCE, NODDED GRIMLY. HE TOO HAD SEEN PLENTY ACTION BUT THIS WAS ALSO A NEW MENACE TO HIM.

THEY DREW BACK TO A SAFE DISTANCE BEFORE THEY TOOK THEIR MASKS OFF, AND IT WAS THEN THAT SAMMY LEARNED HE HAD LOST FOUR OF HIS OWN MEN TO THE GAS.

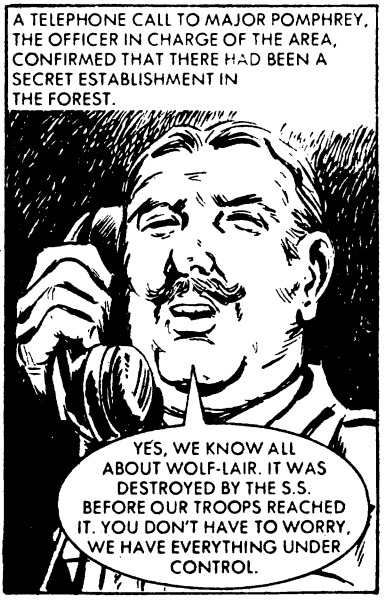
BY THAT EVENING, NICK HAD CHECKED THROUGH THE GERMAN RECORDS BEFORE HE REPORTED TO LIEUTENANT-COLONEL JENKINS, THE OFFICER IN CHARGE OF THE WHOLE OPERATION.

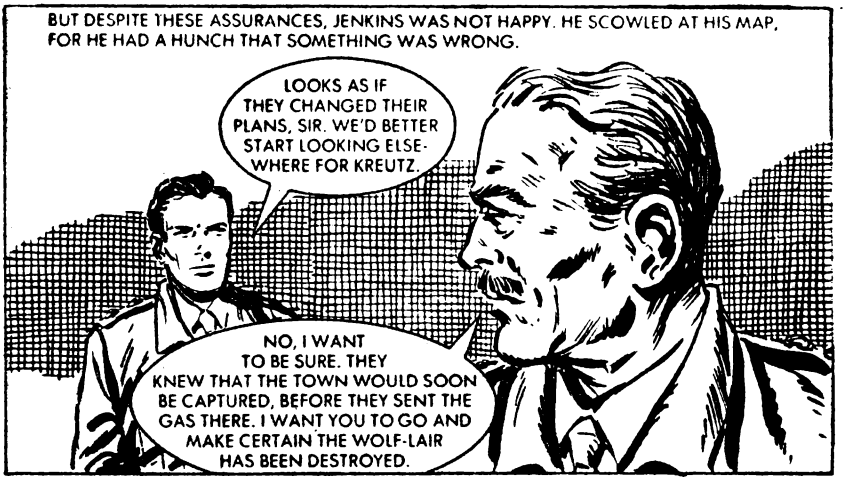
AN EXPERT TEAM WAS SOON CHECKING ALL THE DOCUMENTS, BUT THERE WAS ONLY ONE CLUE TO BE FOUND, AND THAT WAS ONLY THE RUMOUR THAT THE GAS HAD BEEN TAKEN TO SOMEWHERE CODE-NAMED " WOLF-LAIR " FOR TESTING.
THERE ISN'T A MENTION OF IT ANYWHERE IN THEIR FILES, SIR, AND NOBODY KNOWS A THING. WE'RE GETTING NOWHERE!
I'M AFRAID IT WAS ORGANISED AT VERY HIGH LEVEL, WITH ONLY A FEW PEOPLE KNOWING THE DETAILS. WE'VE JUST GOT TO KEEP TRYING.

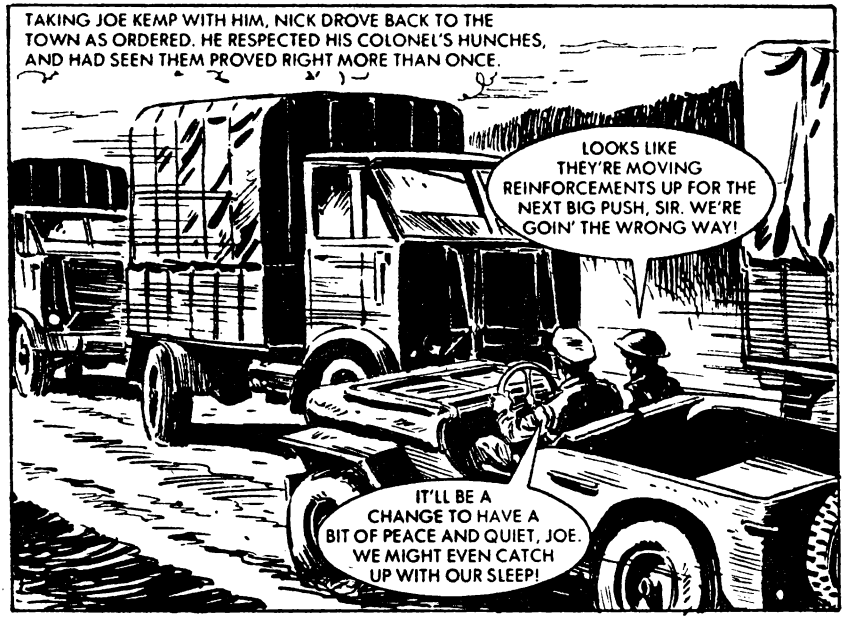
THEN CAME A STROKE OF LUCK. AN ENEMY FIELD H.Q. WAS CAPTURED WITH ALL ITS RECORDS INTACT, AND NICK WENT THERE FAST TO FIND THE INFANTRY ON THE SPOT WERE STILL ACTING WITH UNDERSTANDABLE CAUTION.
WE HAVEN'T HAD TIME TO CHECK FOR BOOBY-TRAPS YET, OLD BOY. I'D WAIT FOR A WHILE IF I WERE YOU.
I CAN'T WAIT, IT'S TOO URGENT. YOU BETTER KEEP YOUR CHAPS CLEAR IN CASE I SET ANYTHING OFF.

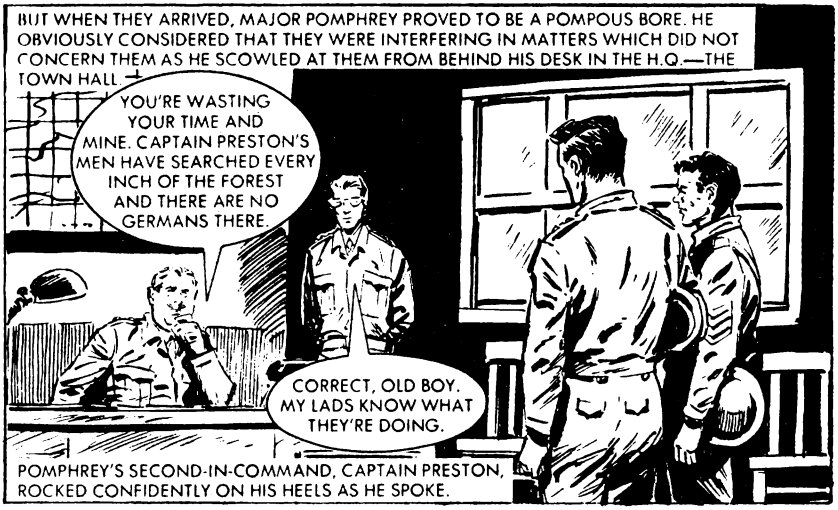

AN ENGINEER OFFICER WHO WAS AN EXPERT IN SUCH MATTERS VOLUNTEERED TO HELP. HE AND NICK SET TO WORK, CONCENTRATING ON THE BOOBY-TRAPPED SAFE THEY FOUND IN THE MAIN OFFICE.
IT'S WIRED TO A COUPLE OF ANTI-TANK MINES UNDER THE FLOORBOARDS —THAT'S WHY THEY DIDN'T LOCK THE SAFE DOOR!
PHEW! LET'S HOPE AS THEY GOT OUT IN SUCH A HURRY THEY'VE LEFT SOMETHING OF INTEREST BEHIND.
LUCKILY THEY HAD, AND NICK WAS SOON CHECKING THROUGH ALL THE PAPERS ONCE THE BOOBY-TRAP WAS DE-FUSED.

AMONG THE DOCUMENTS, NICK FOUND WHAT HE WAS AFTER—THE LOCATION OF WOLF-LAIR. HE REPORTED BACK SWIFTLY TO JENKINS—
IT WAS ON A LIST OF S.S. SPECIAL BASES, AND IT'S IN THE FOREST ABOVE THE TOWN HERE.
BUT THAT'S WELL BEHIND OUR LINES. WE CAPTURED THAT AREA DAYS AGO!


A TELEPHONE CALL TO MAJOR POMPHREY, THE OFFICER IN CHARGE OF THE AREA, CONFIRMED THAT THERE HAD BEEN A SECRET ESTABLISHMENT IN THE FOREST.
YES, WE KNOW ALL ABOUT WOLF-LAIR. IT WAS DESTROYED BY THE S.S. BEFORE OUR TROOPS REACHED IT. YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY, WE HAVE EVERYTHING UNDER CONTROL.


BUT DESPITE THESE ASSURANCES, JENKINS WAS NOT HAPPY. HE SCOWLED AT HIS MAP, FOR HE HAD A HUNCH THAT SOMETHING WAS WRONG.
LOOKS AS IF THEY CHANGED THEIR PLANS, SIR. WE'D BETTER START LOOKING ELSE-WHERE FOR KREUTZ.
NO, I WANT TO BE SURE. THEY KNEW THAT THE TOWN WOULD SOON BE CAPTURED, BEFORE THEY SENT THE GAS THERE. I WANT YOU TO GO AND MAKE CERTAIN THE WOLF-LAIR HAS BEEN DESTROYED.


TAKING JOE KEMP WITH HIM, NICK DROVE BACK TO THE TOWN AS ORDERED. HE RESPECTED HIS COLONEL'S HUNCHES, AND HAD SEEN THEM PROVED RIGHT MORE THAN ONCE.
LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE MOVING REINFORCEMENTS UP FOR THE NEXT BIG PUSH, SIR. WE'RE GOIN' THE WRONG WAY!
IT'LL BE A CHANGE TO HAVE A BIT OF PEACE AND QUIET, JOE. WE MIGHT EVEN CATCH UP WITH OUR SLEEP!


BUT WHEN THEY ARRIVED, MAJOR POMPHREY PROVED TO BE A POMPOUS BORE. HE OBVIOUSLY CONSIDERED THAT THEY WERE INTERFERING IN MATTERS WHICH DID NOT CONCERN THEM AS HE SCOWLED AT THEM FROM BEHIND HIS DESK IN THE H.Q.—THE TOWN HALL.
YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME AND MINE. CAPTAIN PRESTON'S MEN HAVE SEARCHED EVERY INCH OF THE FOREST AND THERE ARE NO GERMANS THERE.
CORRECT, OLD BOY. MY LADS KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING.
POMPHREY'S SECOND-IN-COMMAND, CAPTAIN PRESTON, ROCKED CONFIDENTLY ON HIS HEELS AS HE SPOKE.

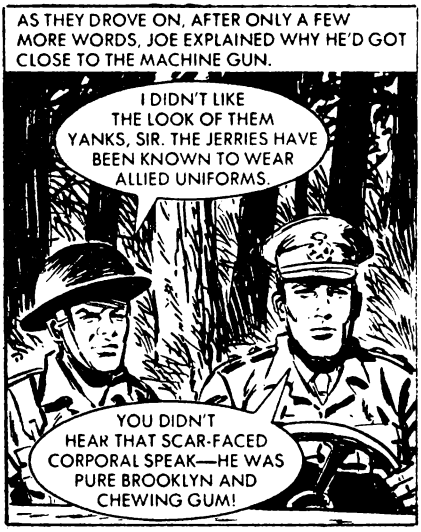
NICK WAS UNIMPRESSED, FOR HE HAD SEEN SOME OF PRESTON'S MEN ON THE WAY IN AND THEY LOOKED SLACK AND INEXPERIENCED.
YOU CAN GET THE DETAILS FROM MY CLERK, BUT DON'T TAKE UP TOO MUCH OF HIS TIME. WE HAVE IMPORTANT WORK TO DO!
WELL, IT'S NOT MUCH OUT OF OUR WAY SO WE'LL JUST HAVE A LOOK ROUND FOR OURSELVES. THANKS FOR YOUR HELP, GENTLEMEN.

LIKE A LOT OF OFFICE-BOUND TYPES, THE MAJOR SEEMED TO REGARD THE FIGHTING TROOPS AS AN UNNECESSARY NUISANCE. NICK AND JOE WERE NOT EXACTLY PLEASED AT THEIR WELCOME—
I SUPPOSE IT TAKES ALL SORTS TO FIGHT A WAR, SIR . . .
YOU SHOULD HAVE MORE RESPECT FOR YOUR SUPERIORS, JOE —BUT I AGREE, HE'S A POMPOUS ASS!

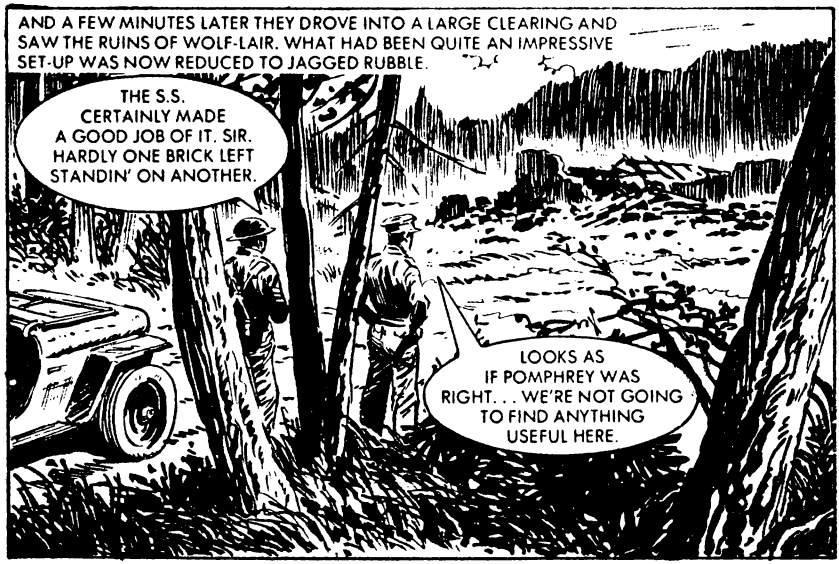
THEY MADE GOOD TIME TOWARDS THE SPOT MARKED AS WOLF-LAIR. THERE WAS A GOOD ROAD LEADING THROUGH THE FOREST, BUT A FEW MILES ALONG IT THERE WAS A TEMPORARY DIVERSION.
HAND ME THE MAP, JOE, WE DON'T WANT TO GET OURSELVES LOST AND IT DOESN'T LOOK AS IF ANYONE ELSE HAS USED THAT TRACK.

THEY MOVED ON UP THE SIDE-TRACK, AND AFTER A FEW MINUTES NICK SLOWED DOWN, FOR HE HAD SPOTTED A JEEP PARKED BESIDE THE TRACK, AMERICAN SOLDIERS CLUSTERED AROUND IT.
I DIDN'T KNOW THE YANKS WERE IN THE AREA. I WONDER IF THEY NEED ANY HELP?

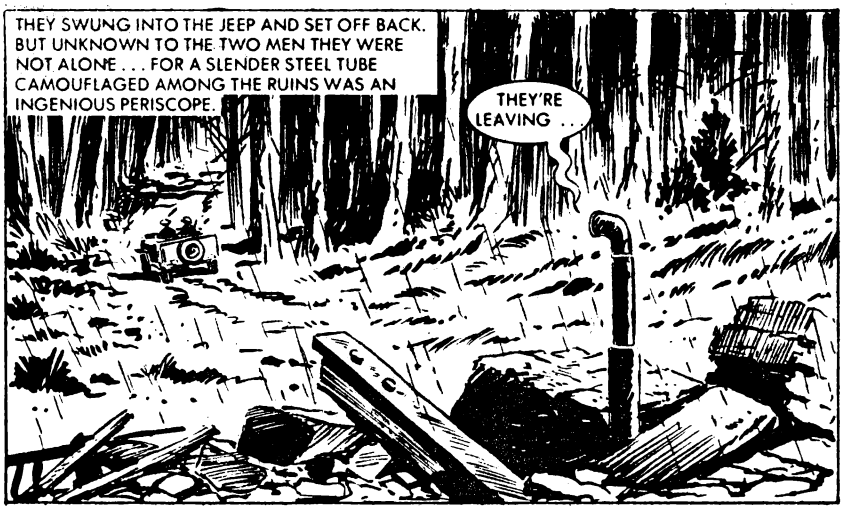
NICK PULLED UP AND INTRODUCED HIMSELF. THE AMERICANS WERE A TOUGH-LOOKING BUNCH. AND A SCOWLING CORPORAL WITH AN UGLY SCAR ACROSS ONE CHEEK GRUNTED THAT THEY NEEDED NO ASSISTANCE.
IN THAT CASE WE'LL PUSH ON. IS THIS TRACK CLEAR AHEAD?
'NOTHER MILE AN' YOU'RE BACK ON THE ROAD, MISTER. THE DIVERSION'S ON ACCOUNT OF FALLEN TREES, THAT'S ALL.
THE YANKS WERE FAR FROM FRIENDLY, AND NICK COULDN'T HELP BUT NOTICE THAT JOE BUSILY SET ABOUT CLEANING THE HEAVY MACHINE GUN WHICH LAY CLEAR OF ITS MOUNTING IN THE BACK OF THE JEEP.


AS THEY DROVE ON, AFTER ONLY A FEW MORE WORDS, JOE EXPLAINED WHY HE'D GOT CLOSE TO THE MACHINE GUN.
I DIDN'T LIKE THE LOOK OF THEM YANKS, SIR. THE JERRIES HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO WEAR ALLIED UNIFORMS.
YOU DIDN'T HEAR THAT SCAR-FACED CORPORAL SPEAK—HE WAS PURE BROOKLYN AND CHEWING GUM!

THEN A FEW MILES FURTHER ON, BEFORE THEY REACHED THE MAIN ROAD AGAIN, NICK TOOK A LOOK AT HIS MAP AND THEN FOLLOWED ANOTHER TRACK.
THIS SHOULD TAKE US STRAIGHT TO WOLF-LAIR. THAT DIVERSION WAS USEFUL AFTER ALL!


AND A FEW MINUTES LATER THEY DROVE INTO A LARGE CLEARING AND SAW THE RUINS OF WOLF-LAIR. WHAT HAD BEEN QUITE AN IMPRESSIVE SET-UP WAS NOW REDUCED TO JAGGED RUBBLE.
THE S.S. CERTAINLY MADE A GOOD JOB OF IT, SIR. HARDLY ONE BRICK LEFT STANDIN' ON ANOTHER.
LOOKS AS IF POMPHREY WAS RIGHT. . . WE'RE NOT GOING TO FIND ANYTHING USEFUL HERE.

AFTER A FEW MINUTES SPENT SCRAMBLING OVER THE RUBBLE AS HEAVY RAIN STARTED FALLING, NICK HAD TO ADMIT THAT HE HAD WASTED HIS TIME. A FEW BATTERED HELMETS AND OTHER REMNANTS OF WAR WERE THE ONLY INDICATION THAT THE NAZIS HAD EVER BEEN HERE.
WELL, SIR, WHAT NOW?
WE'LL GO BACK AND REPORT TO THE COLONEL. BUT I SUPPOSE WE'D BETTER TELL POMPHREY THAT WE'RE LEAVING.


THEY SWUNG INTO THE JEEP AND SET OFF BACK. BUT UNKNOWN TO THE TWO MEN THEY WERE NOT ALONE . . . FOR A SLENDER STEEL TUBE CAMOUFLAGED AMONG THE RUINS WAS AN INGENIOUS PERISCOPE.
THEY'RE LEAVING . . .

AND IN THE VAST UNDERGROUND CONCRETE BUNKER BELOW THE RUINS, COLONEL WOLF KREUTZ SMILED CONFIDENTLY AS HE SAW THE JEEP DRIVE AWAY. THE S.S. EXPERT ON CHEMICAL WARFARE WAS STILL FIGHTING ON FANATICALLY, IT SEEMED.

YOU CAN STAND THE MEN DOWN NOW, ERNST, THEY WON'T BE NEEDED. THE ENGLANDERS ARE NOT SUSPICIOUS.

THEY'LL NEVER KNOW HOW CLOSE THEY WERE TO DEATH!

A HUMOURLESS SMILE HOVERED ON THE LIPS OF CAPTAIN ERNST SCHWEISS, KREUTZ'S EQUALLY-DEDICATED AIDE.

EARLIER, WHEN THE GERMANS HAD BLOWN UP THE BUILDINGS ABOVE, THEY HAD BEEN CAREFUL TO AVOID DAMAGING THE SPECIALLY-REINFORCED UNDERGROUND SECTION—FOR THAT WAS STILL NEEDED AS A STORE FOR DOZENS OF CANISTERS OF DEADLY GAS.

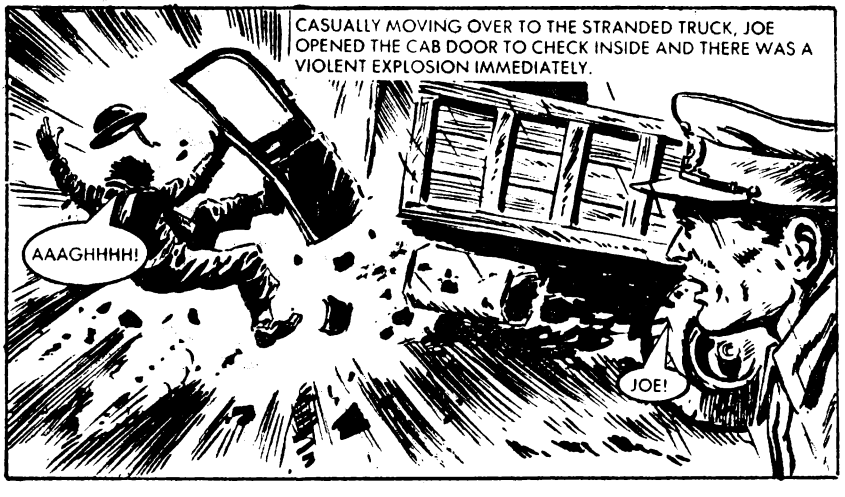
THIS STUFF MAKES ME FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE. IT'S LIKE LIVING BESIDE AN UNEXPLODED BOMB!

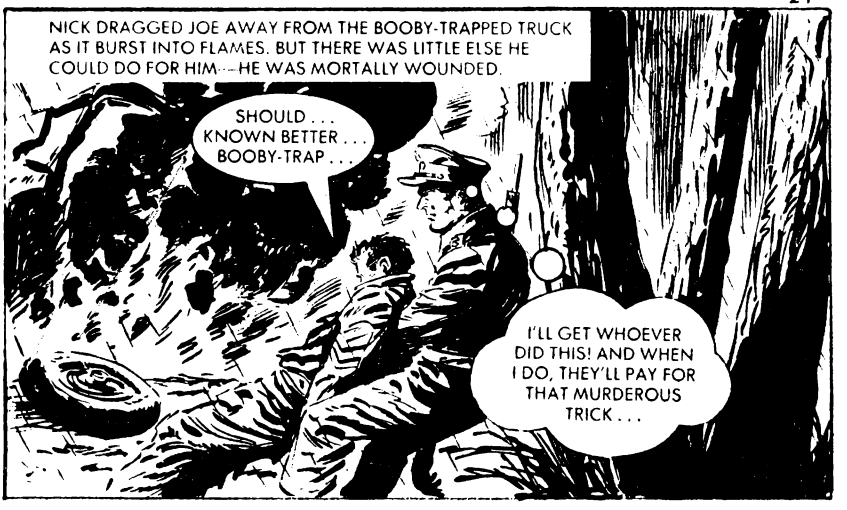
JA, I SHAN'T BE SORRY WHEN THE WIND CHANGES AND OUR ARMY MAKES ITS PLANNED COUNTER-ATTACK.

THE PLAN WAS METICULOUS—GIVEN THE RIGHT WIND CONDITIONS, THE GAS WOULD BE RELEASED TO DRIFT OVER THE ALLIED LINES, TAKING THEM COMPLETELY BY SURPRISE AND WIPING OUT EVERY UNIT IN RANGE. THEN A MASSIVE COUNTER-ATTACK MIGHT WELL TURN THE TIDE OF THE WAR.

UNAWARE OF THE DANGER HIDDEN UNDER THE RUINS, NICK HEADED SWIFTLY BACK TO TOWN WITH JOE.
WE'D BETTER USE THE DIVERSION AGAIN, THEY MIGHT NOT HAVE CLEARED THE MAIN ROAD YET.
SUDDENLY HE JAMMED ON HIS BRAKES—A BRITISH ARMY LORRY WAS ALMOST BLOCKING THE NARROW TRACK.
LOOKS AS IF THEY'VE STUCK IN THE MUD . . .
CAREFUL, SIR—THERE ARE SOME BODIES BESIDE THE TRUCK.
JOE WAS RIGHT. NEAR THE ABANDONED TRUCK WERE THE BODIES OF SOME BRITISH DRIVERS, AND THEY HAD BEEN SHOT.
LOOKS AS IF A CONVOY WAS AMBUSHED AND WHOEVER DID IT GOT THAT LORRY STUCK WHEN THEY TRIED TO DRIVE IT AWAY.
THIS RAIN HAS WASHED OUT ANY CHANCE OF FOLLOWING THE TRACKS OF THE OTHER VEHICLES . . .

A QUICK LOOK ROUND FROM THE RAIN-SOAKED TRACK ASSURED NICK AND JOE THAT THE AMBUSHERS WERE NO LONGER IN THE VICINITY.
I BET THEY WENT BACK TOWARDS THE MAIN ROAD AFTER TURNING THE TRUCKS.
LOOKS AS IF SOME JERRIES ARE STILL AROUND IN THE FOREST, SIR. OUR FRIEND KREUTZ, MAYBE.


CASUALLY MOVING OVER TO THE STRANDED TRUCK, JOE OPENED THE CAB DOOR TO CHECK INSIDE AND THERE WAS A VIOLENT EXPLOSION IMMEDIATELY.
AAAGHHHH!
JOE!


NICK DRAGGED JOE AWAY FROM THE BOOBY-TRAPPED TRUCK AS IT BURST INTO FLAMES. BUT THERE WAS LITTLE ELSE HE COULD DO FOR HIM—HE WAS MORTALLY WOUNDED.
SHOULD . . . KNOWN BETTER . . . BOOBY-TRAP . . .
I'LL GET WHOEVER DID THIS! AND WHEN I DO, THEY'LL PAY FOR THAT MURDEROUS TRICK . . .

JOE DIED ALMOST AS SOON AS NICK PUT HIM IN THE JEEP AND IT WAS A SAD JOURNEY BACK TO THE TOWN WHERE THE SMIRKING MAJOR POMPHREY WAS THE FIRST PERSON HE SAW.
WELL? ARE YOU SATISFIED THAT THE AREA IS CLEAR OF GERMANS?
I'VE GOT NEWS FOR YOU, SIR—THAT FOREST ISN'T AS EMPTY AS CAPTAIN PRESTON THINKS!

THE STARTLED MAJOR CONFIRMED THAT A RATION CONVOY HE HAD BEEN EXPECTING WAS OVERDUE, AND THE LOCATION OF THE ABANDONED TRUCK TIED IN WITH THE CONVOY ROUTE.

THE DIVERSION SIGN MUST HAVE BEEN PUT UP TO LEAD THE CONVOY INTO AN AMBUSH!

I'LL HAVE MY MEN MAKE A COMPLETE SEARCH OF THE AREA RIGHT AWAY.

LEAVING THE TWO UNEASY OFFICERS TO HUNT DOWN THE AMBUSHERS, NICK DROVE OFF TO REPORT TO COLONEL JENKINS AND ARRANGE FOR JOE'S BURIAL.

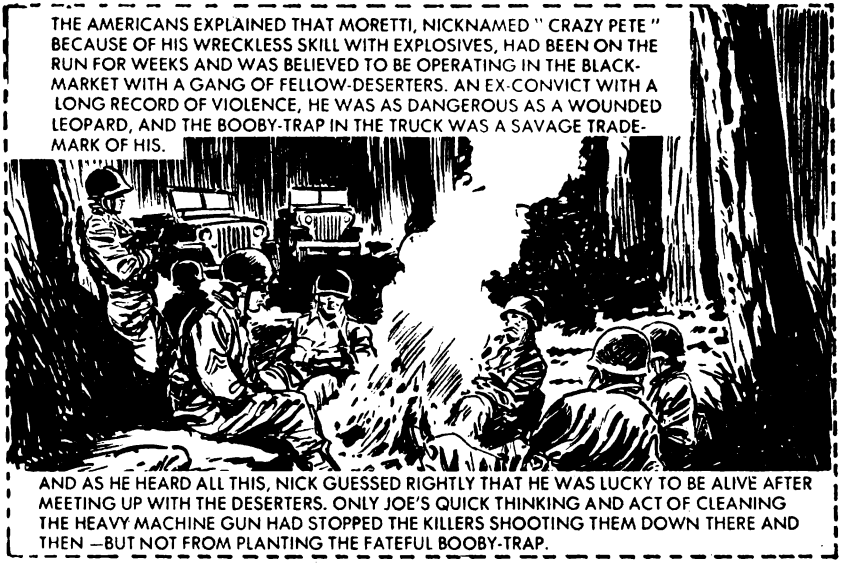
IT SOUNDS AS IF KREUTZ AND HIS MEN ARE HIDING IN THAT AREA SOMEWHERE. AND IF THEY'RE STEALING RATIONS, THEY INTEND TO STAY THERE.

TO USE THE GAS, YOU MEAN? IT CERTAINLY LOOKS THAT WAY.

WHEN NICK MENTIONED THE AMERICANS HE HAD SEEN, JENKINS WONDERED IF THE AMERICAN AUTHORITIES WERE ALSO HUNTING FOR KREUTZ. HE CHECKED QUICKLY.

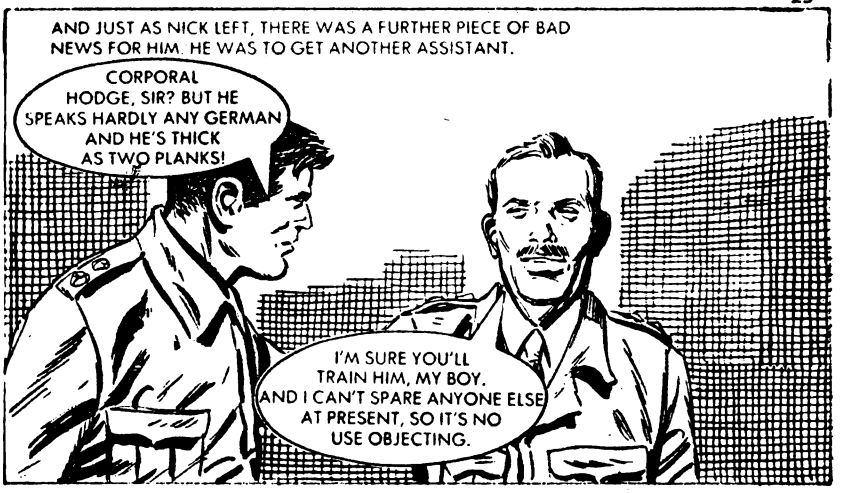
NO, THEY SAY THEY'VE NO PEOPLE IN THE AREA. I'VE GOT THEIR LIAISON OFFICER ON THE LINE.

BUT WHEN NICK SPOKE TO THE AMERICAN HIMSELF, AND DESCRIBED THE SCAR-FACED CORPORAL, THERE WAS A STARTLED REACTION FROM THE ALLIED OFFICERS.
A SCAR-FACED CORPORAL, YOU SAY? HECK, THAT'S MORETTI—HE DESERTED AFTER KILLIN' A TOP-SERGEANT!

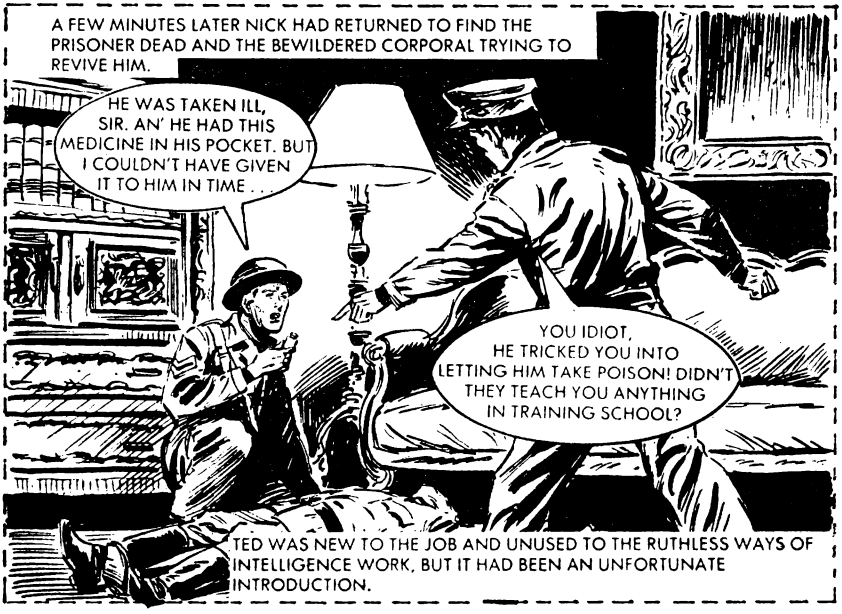

THE AMERICANS EXPLAINED THAT MORETTI, NICKNAMED " CRAZY PETE " BECAUSE OF HIS WRECKLESS SKILL WITH EXPLOSIVES, HAD BEEN ON THE RUN FOR WEEKS AND WAS BELIEVED TO BE OPERATING IN THE BLACK-MARKET WITH A GANG OF FELLOW-DESERTERS. AN EX-CONVICT WITH A LONG RECORD OF VIOLENCE, HE WAS AS DANGEROUS AS A WOUNDED LEOPARD, AND THE BOOBY-TRAP IN THE TRUCK WAS A SAVAGE TRADE-MARK OF HIS.
AND AS HE HEARD ALL THIS, NICK GUESSED RIGHTLY THAT HE WAS LUCKY TO BE ALIVE AFTER MEETING UP WITH THE DESERTERS. ONLY JOE'S QUICK THINKING AND ACT OF CLEANING THE HEAVY MACHINE GUN HAD STOPPED THE KILLERS SHOOTING THEM DOWN THERE AND THEN —BUT NOT FROM PLANTING THE FATEFUL BOOBY-TRAP.

NICK WANTED TO SET OUT IMMEDIATELY TO HUNT DOWN MORETTI AND AVENGE JOE, BUT THE COLONEL REMINDED HIM THAT KREUTZ WAS MORE IMPORTANT.
BUT THAT BOOBY-TRAP WASN'T EVEN NECESSARY, SIR! IT WAS COLD-BLOODED MURDER!
I KNOW, NICK, BUT HE'S PROBABLY MILES AWAY BY NOW IN SOME OTHER SECTOR. AND THAT GAS HAS GOT TO BE FOUND BEFORE KREUTZ USES IT ON OUR TROOPS!

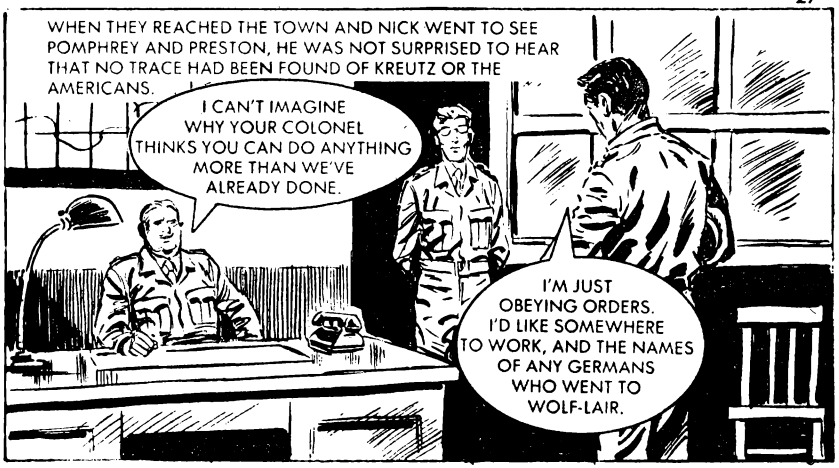
IT WAS USELESS TO ARGUE WITH JENKINS. BUT NICK COULDN'T BELIEVE THAT KREUTZ WAS STILL IN THE WOLF-LAIR AREA.
IT'S ALMOST CERTAIN THE YANK DESERTERS STAGED THAT AMBUSH, SIR, NOT KREUTZ. SO WHERE DO I LOOK FOR HIM?
MAKE SOME MORE ENQUIRIES ABOUT WOLF-LAIR, FROM THE GERMANS WHO KNEW THE PLACE. YOU MIGHT PICK UP A CLUE THAT WAY.

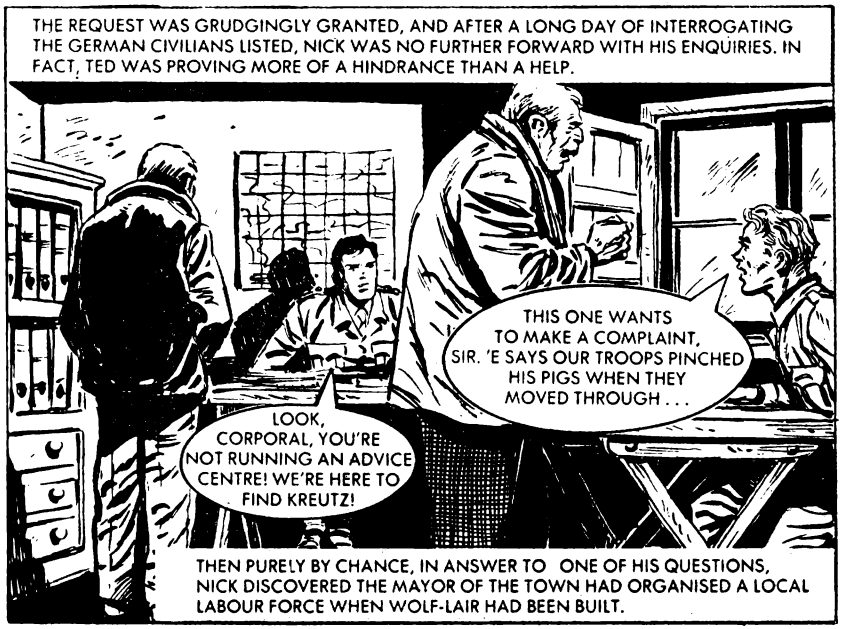

AND JUST AS NICK LEFT, THERE WAS A FURTHER PIECE OF BAD NEWS FOR HIM. HE WAS TO GET ANOTHER ASSISTANT.
CORPORAL HODGE, SIR? BUT HE SPEAKS HARDLY ANY GERMAN AND HE'S THICK AS TWO PLANKS!
I'M SURE YOU'LL TRAIN HIM, MY BOY. AND I CAN'T SPARE ANYONE ELSE AT PRESENT, SO IT'S NO USE OBJECTING.

NICK HAD ONLY WORKED WITH TED HODGE ONCE BEFORE . . . WHEN HE HAD LEFT HIM GUARDING AN IMPORTANT NAZI OFFICER THEY HAD ARRESTED SOME MONTHS BEFORE.
I'LL GO AND COLLECT SOME TRANSPORT. WATCH HIM, AND DON'T OPEN THE DOOR TO ANYONE EXCEPT ME.
RIGHT, SIR, HE WON'T GET AWAY.

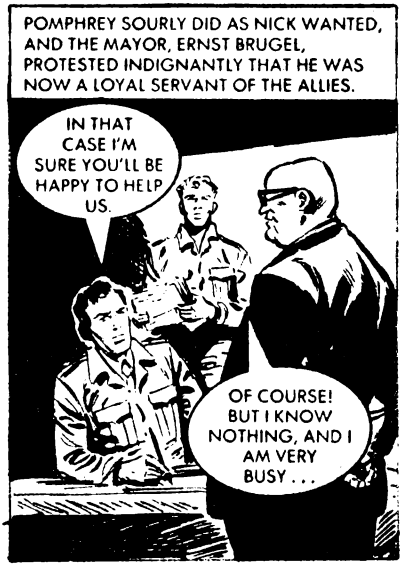

A FEW MINUTES LATER NICK HAD RETURNED TO FIND THE PRISONER DEAD AND THE BEWILDERED CORPORAL TRYING TO REVIVE HIM.
HE WAS TAKEN ILL, SIR. AN' HE HAD THIS MEDICINE IN HIS POCKET. BUT I COULDN'T HAVE GIVEN IT TO HIM IN TIME . . .
YOU IDIOT, HE TRICKED YOU INTO LETTING HIM TAKE POISON! DIDN'T THEY TEACH YOU ANYTHING IN TRAINING SCHOOL?
TED WAS NEW TO THE JOB AND UNUSED TO THE RUTHLESS WAYS OF INTELLIGENCE WORK, BUT IT HAD BEEN AN UNFORTUNATE INTRODUCTION.

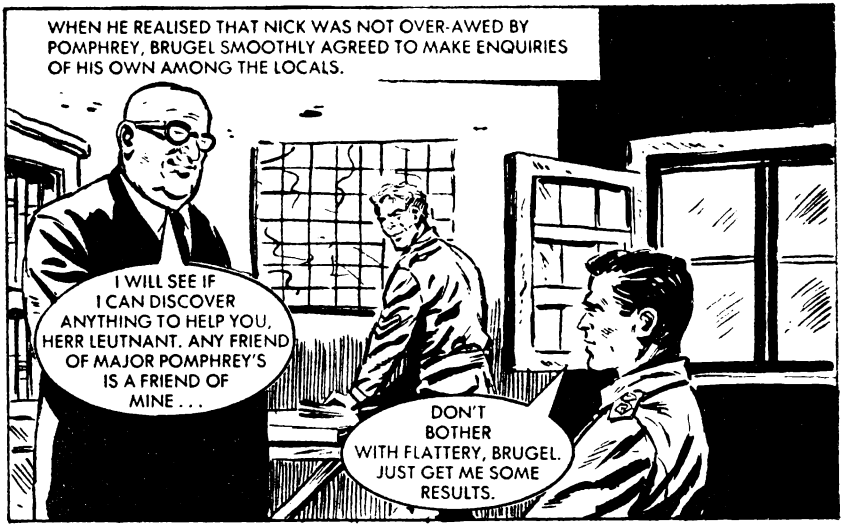
AND NOW, WHEN HE SAW TED WAITING PATIENTLY OUTSIDE BY HIS JEEP, NICK GROANED INWARDLY AT THE THOUGHT OF HAVING TO WORK WITH HIM AGAIN.
GET IN! AND IF WE TAKE ANY PRISONERS, DON'T LET THEM DRINK ANYTHING WITHOUT TRYING IT YOURSELF FIRST!
SORRY ABOUT THAT, SIR. BUT 'E SEEMED A NICE SORT OF BLOKE AND I WAS WORRIED . . .
A DARK SCOWL SILENCED TED WHO SHUT UP QUICKLY AND KEPT THAT WAY.


WHEN THEY REACHED THE TOWN AND NICK WENT TO SEE POMPHREY AND PRESTON, HE WAS NOT SURPRISED TO HEAR THAT NO TRACE HAD BEEN FOUND OF KREUTZ OR THE AMERICANS.
I CAN'T IMAGINE WHY YOUR COLONEL THINKS YOU CAN DO ANYTHING MORE THAN WE'VE ALREADY DONE.
I'M JUST OBEYING ORDERS. I'D LIKE SOMEWHERE TO WORK, AND THE NAMES OF ANY GERMANS WHO WENT TO WOLF-LAIR.

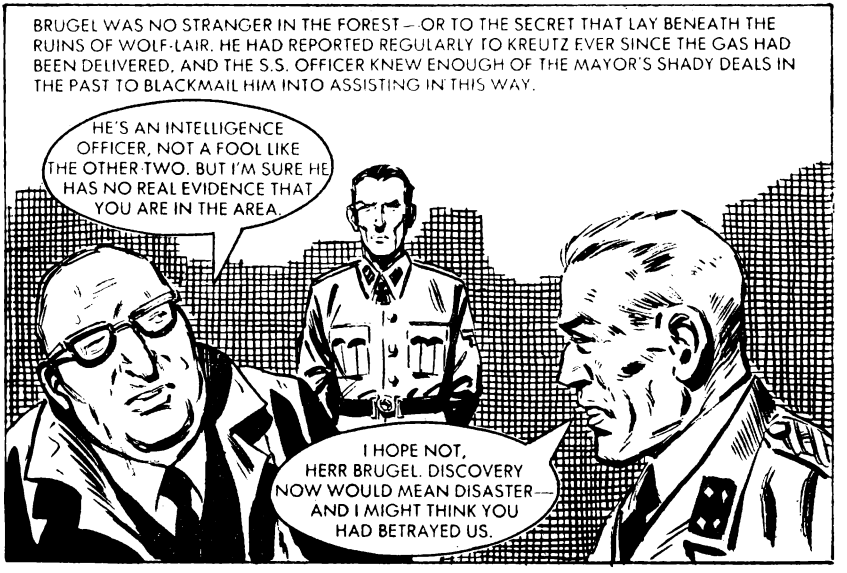

THE REQUEST WAS GRUDGINGLY GRANTED, AND AFTER A LONG DAY OF INTERROGATING THE GERMAN CIVILIANS LISTED, NICK WAS NO FURTHER FORWARD WITH HIS ENQUIRIES. IN FACT, TED WAS PROVING MORE OF A HINDRANCE THAN A HELP.
THIS ONE WANTS TO MAKE A COMPLAINT, SIR. 'E SAYS OUR TROOPS PINCHED HIS PIGS WHEN THEY MOVED THROUGH . . .
LOOK, CORPORAL, YOU'RE NOT RUNNING AN ADVICE CENTRE! WE'RE HERE TO FIND KREUTZ!
THEN PURELY BY CHANCE, IN ANSWER TO ONE OF HIS QUESTIONS, NICK DISCOVERED THE MAYOR OF THE TOWN HAD ORGANISED A LOCAL LABOUR FORCE WHEN WOLF-LAIR HAD BEEN BUILT.

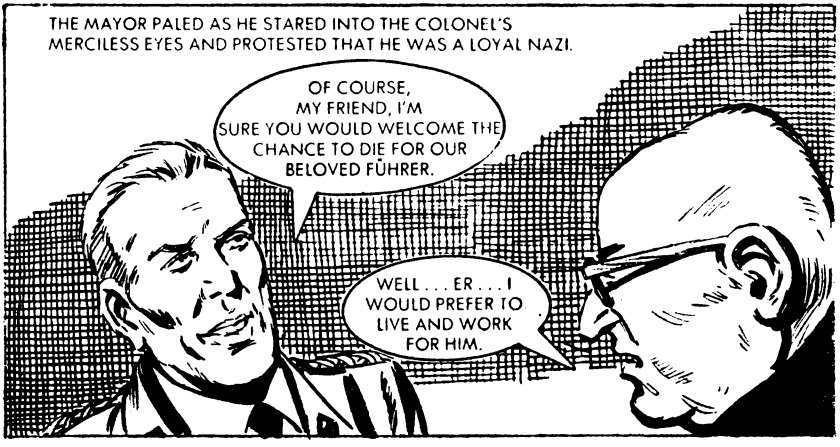
THERE WAS NO MENTION OF THIS ON POMPHREY'S LIST AND NICK WENT ANGRILY TO FIND OUT WHY.
HE'S A BUSY MAN, VERY USEFUL TO ME IN SORTING LOCAL PROBLEMS.
YES, BUT I MUST SEE HIM. IF YOU WANT TO COMPLAIN, CONTACT MY COLONEL.


POMPHREY SOURLY DID AS NICK WANTED, AND THE MAYOR, ERNST BRUGEL, PROTESTED INDIGNANTLY THAT HE WAS NOW A LOYAL SERVANT OF THE ALLIES.
IN THAT CASE I'M SURE YOU'LL BE HAPPY TO HELP US.
OF COURSE! BUT I KNOW NOTHING, AND I AM VERY BUSY . . .

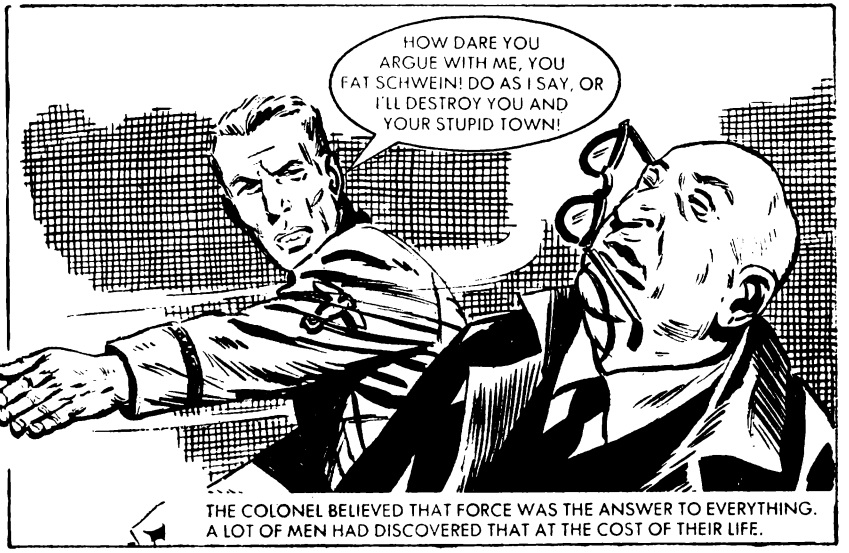

WHEN HE REALISED THAT NICK WAS NOT OVER-AWED BY POMPHREY, BRUGEL SMOOTHLY AGREED TO MAKE ENQUIRIES OF HIS OWN AMONG THE LOCALS.
I WILL SEE IF I CAN DISCOVER ANYTHING TO HELP YOU, HERR LEUTNANT. ANY FRIEND OF MAJOR POMPHREY'S IS A FRIEND OF MINE . . .
DON'T BOTHER WITH FLATTERY, BRUGEL. JUST GET ME SOME RESULTS.

NICK WAS NOT IMPRESSED BY THE MAYOR, BUT HE WOULD HAVE LIKED HIM EVEN LESS IF HE COULD HAVE SEEN HIM A FEW HOURS LATER, SKULKING OUT OF TOWN AND INTO THE FOREST, DESPITE THE HEAVY RAIN.
IT'S A LONG WALK IN THIS WEATHER, BUT I CAN'T RISK USING A VEHICLE . . .


BRUGEL WAS NO STRANGER IN THE FOREST — OR TO THE SECRET THAT LAY BENEATH THE RUINS OF WOLF-LAIR. HE HAD REPORTED REGULARLY TO KREUTZ EVER SINCE THE GAS HAD BEEN DELIVERED, AND THE S.S. OFFICER KNEW ENOUGH OF THE MAYOR'S SHADY DEALS IN THE PAST TO BLACKMAIL HIM INTO ASSISTING IN THIS WAY.
HE'S AN INTELLIGENCE OFFICER, NOT A FOOL LIKE THE OTHER TWO. BUT I'M SURE HE HAS NO REAL EVIDENCE THAT YOU ARE IN THE AREA.
I HOPE NOT, HERR BRUGEL. DISCOVERY NOW WOULD MEAN DISASTER — AND I MIGHT THINK YOU HAD BETRAYED US.


THE MAYOR PALED AS HE STARED INTO THE COLONEL'S MERCILESS EYES AND PROTESTED THAT HE WAS A LOYAL NAZI.
OF COURSE, MY FRIEND, I'M SURE YOU WOULD WELCOME THE CHANCE TO DIE FOR OUR BELOVED FÜHRER.
WELL . . . ER . . . I WOULD PREFER TO LIVE AND WORK FOR HIM.

THE BRITISH NEEDED A RED HERRING, KREUTZ DECIDED—SOMETHING TO OCCUPY THEIR ATTENTION. HE CAME UP WITH A QUICK ANSWER.
MY MEN HAVE SEEN AMERICAN DESERTERS CAMPED IN THIS VALLEY. THEY ARE NOT BOTHERING US, BUT IF YOU TOLD THE ENGLANDERS, THEY WOULD BLAME THE AMERICANS FOR ANY TROUBLE AROUND HERE.
BUT, THEY ARE LOOKING FOR YOU—NOT FOR AMERICANS!

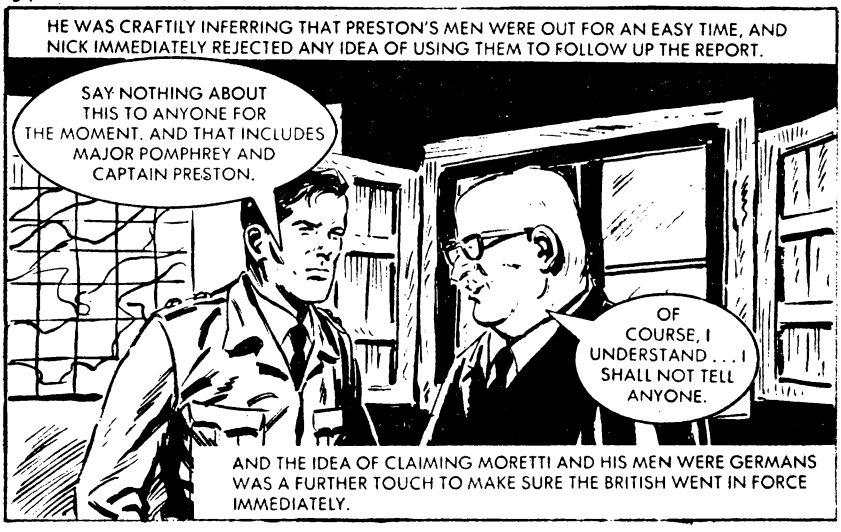

HOW DARE YOU ARGUE WITH ME, YOU FAT SCHWEIN! DO AS I SAY, OR I'LL DESTROY YOU AND YOUR STUPID TOWN!
THE COLONEL BELIEVED THAT FORCE WAS THE ANSWER TO EVERYTHING. A LOT OF MEN HAD DISCOVERED THAT AT THE COST OF THEIR LIFE.

SO WHEN BRUGEL LIMPED BACK HOME IN THE EARLY HOURS OF THE MORNING, HE WAS A VERY WORRIED MAN INDEED.
HE'S A MAD DOG. BUT IF I DON'T DO AS HE SAYS HE'S QUITE CAPABLE OF CARRYING OUT HIS THREATS. AAGGHH, MY HEAD ACHES . . .

THERE WAS A FURTHER HEADACHE IN STORE FOR HIM. HE HAD VISITORS – CRAZY PETE MORETTI AND A SIDE-KICK.
HERR MORETTI! I . . . I DIDN'T EXPECT YOU . . .
YOU WORK LATE, FATSO, BUT WE'VE MADE OURSELVES AT HOME. I CAME TO SEE IF YOU'D FOUND A MARKET FOR THEM RATIONS.

NOT ONLY WAS THE UNFORTUNATE MAYOR CONTROLLED BY KREUTZ, BUT HE WAS ALSO THE MIDDLE-MAN IN THE BLACK-MARKET FOR CRAZY PETE AND HIS BUNCH OF KILLERS, THANKS TO HIS GREED TO MAKE FAST MONEY.
YOU'LL HAVE TO GIVE ME MORE TIME, HERR MORETTI. THE BRITISH KEEP ME VERY BUSY AND I MUST BE CAREFUL.
THAT'S YOUR PROBLEM, PAL. AND MAKE SURE THEIR PATROLS STAY AWAY FROM OUR CAMP, UNDERSTAND?

THERE WERE TIMES WHEN THE MAYOR WISHED HE HAD NEVER LEFT HIS LITTLE FARM AND THIS WAS ONE OF THEM AS MORETTI COLDLY MADE HIS MESSAGE CLEAR.
REMEMBER, PAL, WE'RE PARTNERS. AND THAT MEANS IF WE GET TROUBLE, YOU GET DEAD!
NEIN, HERR MORETTI, YOU'RE QUITE SAFE. THE PATROLS USE MY FORESTERS AS GUIDES, AND THEY DON'T GO ANYWHERE NEAR YOUR CAMP.
AFTER HIS VISITORS HAD DEPARTED, HE SPENT A SLEEPLESS NIGHT PACING THE FLOOR AND WONDERING WHO TO BETRAY.
THE WAR IS NOT OVER YET, SO I MUST REMAIN LOYAL. BUT THE BLACK MARKET PAYS VERY WELL. ACH, IT WILL HAVE TO BE THE AMERICAN. BUT I MUST MAKE SURE HE DOES NOT LIVE TO DESTROY ME . . .
THE NEXT MORNING HE HAD HIS STORY READY AND REPORTED TO NICK THAT SOME GERMAN TROOPS WERE HIDING IN ONE OF THE FOREST VALLEYS.
BUT IF THE FORESTERS KNOW THIS, WHY HAVEN'T THEY TAKEN ANY BRITISH PATROLS THERE?
PERHAPS THE TROOPS DO NOT LIKE TO WALK TOO FAR. I CAN ONLY TELL YOU WHAT I HAVE HEARD . . .


HE WAS CRAFTILY INFERRING THAT PRESTON'S MEN WERE OUT FOR AN EASY TIME, AND NICK IMMEDIATELY REJECTED ANY IDEA OF USING THEM TO FOLLOW UP THE REPORT.
SAY NOTHING ABOUT THIS TO ANYONE FOR THE MOMENT. AND THAT INCLUDES MAJOR POMPHREY AND CAPTAIN PRESTON.
OF COURSE, I UNDERSTAND . . . I SHALL NOT TELL ANYONE.
AND THE IDEA OF CLAIMING MORETTI AND HIS MEN WERE GERMANS WAS A FURTHER TOUCH TO MAKE SURE THE BRITISH WENT IN FORCE IMMEDIATELY.

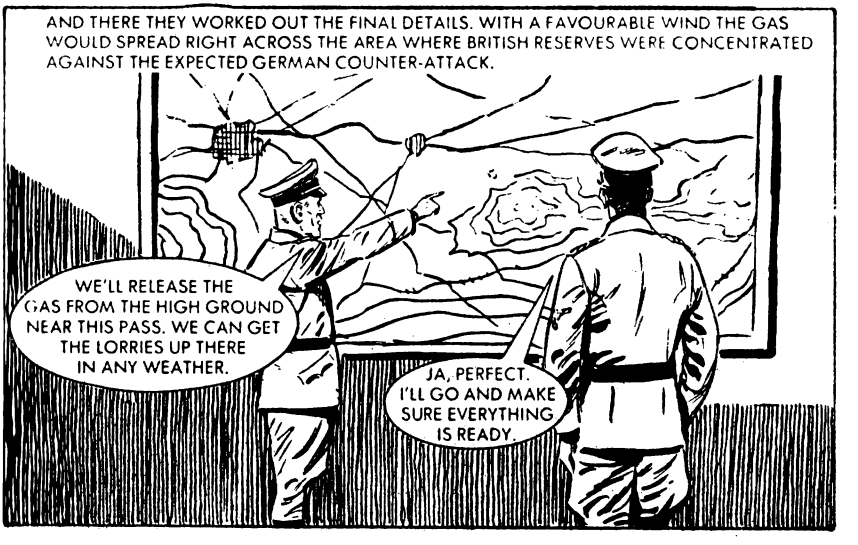
THE WILY GERMAN WAS DETERMINED TO MAKE SURE CRAZY PETE DID NOT SURVIVE TO BETRAY HIM. BUT THIS PRESENTED DIFFICULTIES, FOR IT MEANT HE HAD TO ACCOMPANY THE ATTACKERS. AND THAT SAME DAY, POMPHREY CAME LOOKING FOR HIM—
AH, BRUGEL. I WANT YOU TO COME WITH ME TO CONTROL H.Q. TO DISCUSS THE NEW BILLETTING ARRANGEMENTS.
ER, I'M SORRY. THE LIEUTENANT WANTS ME TO HELP HIM, IT'S RATHER IMPORTANT . . .

POMPHREY, WHO ALREADY RESENTED NICK'S PRESENCE, STORMED IN TO NICK'S OFFICE TO PROTEST AT THE CHALLENGE TO HIS AUTHORITY.
BRUGEL WON'T TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON, BUT I SHALL FIND OUT! AND IF YOU ARE WORKING BEHIND MY BACK, YOU'LL REGRET IT!
YOUR AUTHORITY DOESN'T EXTEND OUTSIDE THE TOWN, SIR. IF YOU'RE NOT SATISFIED, GET IN TOUCH WITH MY C.O.
THE MAJOR SPLUTTERED WITH RAGE, RETREATING BACK TO HIS OWN OFFICE.

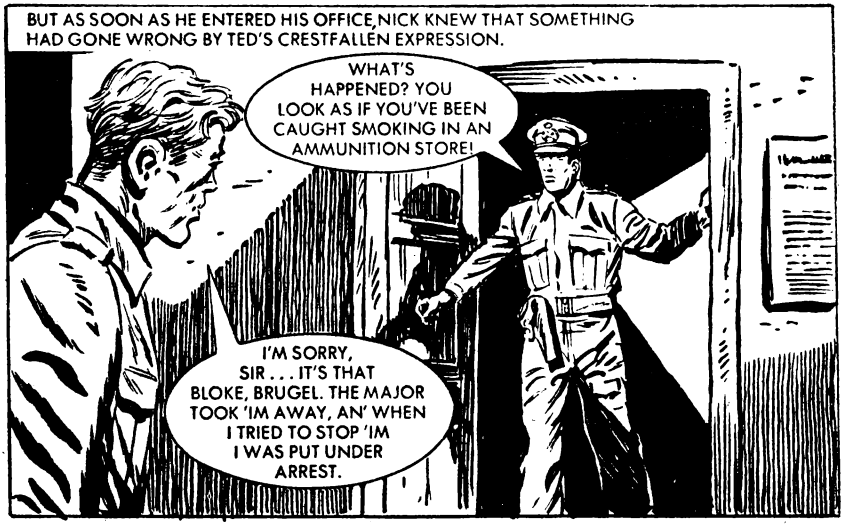
NICK'S NEXT MOVE WAS TO REPORT TO JENKINS, BUT BEFORE LEAVING HE FIRMLY INSTRUCTED TED TO KEEP BRUGEL AWAY FROM THE IRATE MAJOR.
GET BRUGEL INTO OUR OFFICE AND KEEP HIM THERE UNTIL I GET BACK. I DON'T WANT HIM SAYING ANYTHING TO ANYONE.
RIGHT, SIR, I'LL GO AND COLLECT HIM STRAIGHT AWAY.
TED WAS DETERMINED TO DO HIS BEST, AND NICK ONLY HOPED THAT IT WAS GOOD ENOUGH.

BACK AT H.Q., THE COLONEL AGREED IMMEDIATELY TO NICK'S REQUEST FOR EXPERIENCED TROOPS HE COULD TRUST FOR THE OPERATION.
MOVE FAST—THERE ARE SIGNS THE GERMANS ARE PLANNING A COUNTER-ATTACK, AND THE WEATHER'S CHANGING.
YES, I'D NOTICED! AND THE WIND'S STARTING TO ALTER AND BLOW TOWARDS OUR LINES.
BOTH KNEW THAT GAS WAS A WEAPON WHICH REQUIRED A FAVOURABLE WIND BEFORE IT COULD BE EFFECTIVE.
I HOPE ALL THIS EFFORT ISN'T GOING TO BE WASTED. I DON'T REALLY TRUST BRUGEL . . .
WE CAN'T TAKE CHANCES, EVEN THOUGH WE'VE NO REAL PROOF. AND I'LL BACK YOU UP ALL THE WAY.
TO NICK'S DELIGHT, THE COLONEL HAD ARRANGED FOR HIM TO WORK WITH SAMMY KNIGHT'S MEN AGAIN, AND SAMMY RODE WITH HIM IN THE JEEP.
DO YOU RECKON THIS KREUTZ CHARACTER WILL PUT UP MUCH OF A FIGHT, NICK?
THAT DEPENDS ON HOW MANY TROOPS HE HAS—AND IF WE CAN FIND HIM! SO DON'T BE TOO HOPEFUL!

COLONEL KREUTZ WAS ALSO INTERESTED IN THE WEATHER. HE AND SCHWEISS LOOKED CONFIDENTLY UP AT THE SNOW-LADEN CLOUDS FORMING ABOVE THE RUINS OF WOLF-LAIR. THEY HAD JUST RECEIVED A SIGNAL FROM THEIR SUPERIORS—
SO, THE COUNTER-ATTACK WILL BEGIN AT DAWN. THIS COULD WELL REDUCE THE ALLIED AIR ACTIVITY!
JA, AND THE WIND SHOULD BE JUST RIGHT FOR THE RELEASE OF OUR GAS.
ONE LAST LOOK AROUND, AND THEY WENT BACK BELOW.


AND THERE THEY WORKED OUT THE FINAL DETAILS. WITH A FAVOURABLE WIND THE GAS WOULD SPREAD RIGHT ACROSS THE AREA WHERE BRITISH RESERVES WERE CONCENTRATED AGAINST THE EXPECTED GERMAN COUNTER-ATTACK.
WE'LL RELEASE THE GAS FROM THE HIGH GROUND NEAR THIS PASS. WE CAN GET THE LORRIES UP THERE IN ANY WEATHER.
JA, PERFECT. I'LL GO AND MAKE SURE EVERYTHING IS READY.

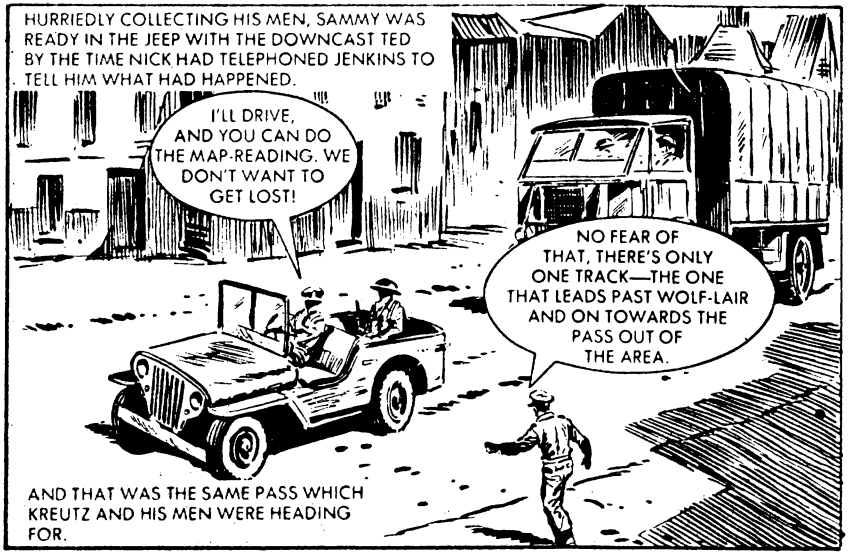
WHEN NICK ARRIVED IN THE TOWN WITH SAMMY AND HIS MEN, IT WAS SNOWING HARD. AND THE WIND WAS BLOWING STEADILY ACROSS THE ALLIED FRONT.
BY MIDNIGHT THERE'LL BE DEEP SNOW IN THE FOREST. YOU STILL INTEND TO GO AHEAD WITH THE OPERATION?
YES, IT'LL HAMPER THE ENEMY AS MUCH AS US. YOUR MEN HAD BETTER HAVE SOME FOOD WHILE I BREAK THE NEWS TO POMPHREY.


BUT AS SOON AS HE ENTERED HIS OFFICE, NICK KNEW THAT SOMETHING HAD GONE WRONG BY TED'S CRESTFALLEN EXPRESSION.
WHAT'S HAPPENED? YOU LOOK AS IF YOU'VE BEEN CAUGHT SMOKING IN AN AMMUNITION STORE!
I'M SORRY, SIR . . . IT'S THAT BLOKE, BRUGEL. THE MAJOR TOOK 'IM AWAY, AN' WHEN I TRIED TO STOP 'IM I WAS PUT UNDER ARREST.

MISERABLY TED EXPLAINED THAT WHEN BRUGEL TOO WAS THREATENED WITH IMPRISONMENT BY POMPHREY, THE GERMAN HAD TOLD HIM ALL ABOUT THE HIDE-OUT IN THE VALLEY.

DESPITE HIS ANGER, NICK REALISED HE WAS BEING UNFAIR, FOR TED HAD BEEN OUTRANKED BY THE POMPOUS MAJOR. AND AS HE TRIED TO WORK THINGS OUT, SAMMY SPOKE UP.

SUDDENLY NICK SAW A WAY IN WHICH HE COULD STILL HIT THE GERMANS, IF PRESTON WAS AS INEFFICIENT AS HE APPEARED TO BE.
THEY'LL JUST MOVE STRAIGHT IN, AND THE JERRIES WILL WITHDRAW. SO IF WE MOVE FAST WE MIGHT BE IN TIME TO CUT THEM OFF!
YES, THEY'RE ALMOST CERTAIN TO HEAD FOR THE HIGHEST PART OF THE FOREST, SO THEY CAN USE THEIR GAS AS A LAST RESORT.


HURRIEDLY COLLECTING HIS MEN, SAMMY WAS READY IN THE JEEP WITH THE DOWNCAST TED BY THE TIME NICK HAD TELEPHONED JENKINS TO TELL HIM WHAT HAD HAPPENED.
I'LL DRIVE, AND YOU CAN DO THE MAP-READING. WE DON'T WANT TO GET LOST!
NO FEAR OF THAT, THERE'S ONLY ONE TRACK—THE ONE THAT LEADS PAST WOLF-LAIR AND ON TOWARDS THE PASS OUT OF THE AREA.
AND THAT WAS THE SAME PASS WHICH KREUTZ AND HIS MEN WERE HEADING FOR.

OFF THEY SET, DRIVING INTO THE FALLING SNOW WHICH GREW HEAVIER BY THE MINUTE.
DO YOU THINK THEY'LL USE THE GAS ON POMPHREY AND HIS MEN?
THEY WON'T WASTE IT AGAINST SUCH A SMALL FORCE. I RECKON THEY'LL JUST PULL OUT QUIETLY AS SOON AS THEY SEE POMPHREY'S BLOKES.
OF COURSE, THANKS TO BRUGEL, NICK WAS STILL UNAWARE THAT THE MEN IN THE VALLEY WERE NOT GERMANS BUT MORETTI AND HIS AMERICAN DESERTERS.

MEANWHILE, MAJOR POMPHREY AND CAPTAIN PRESTON WERE PREPARING FOR THEIR BATTLE, WATCHED WARILY BY BRUGEL WHO HAD BROUGHT THEM AS CLOSE AS THEY DARED COME IN VEHICLES TO THE CAMP.
I SUGGEST WE LEAVE THE TRUCKS HERE AND SPLIT FORCES, MAJOR. ONE GROUP CAN GO ROUND TO THE END OF THE VALLEY TO CUT THE GERMANS OFF . . .
THERE'S NO TIME FOR FANCY TACTICS, CAPTAIN, I WANT TO GET THIS BUSINESS OVER! THE GERMANS WON'T BE EXPECTING TROUBLE, ANYWAY.

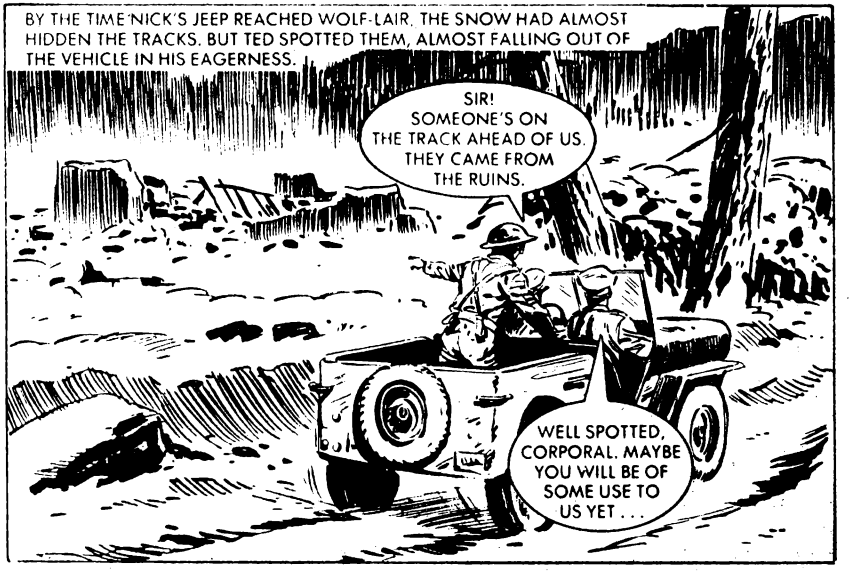
THE OVERBEARING MAJOR HAD HIS WAY, AND WITH BRUGEL AS AN UNWILLING GUIDE THEY HEADED INTO THE VALLEY.
THEY'LL PROBABLY BE ONLY TOO GLAD TO SURRENDER. THEY MUST REALISE THE WAR IS AS GOOD AS OVER!
MORE OFFICERS LIKE HIM AND HITLER WOULD BE IN LONDON!
CRAZY PETE MORETTI MAY NOT HAVE BEEN INTERESTED IN THE WAR, BUT HE WAS IN SURVIVAL, AND HE HAD POSTED SENTRIES.
WE GOT COMPANY, LED BY THAT FAT KRAUT BRUGEL. I GUESS PETE WILL WANNA WELCOME 'EM!
WHEN CRAZY PETE HEARD THE SENTRY'S REPORT HE WAS UN-CONCERNED, FOR HIS PLANS HAD ALREADY BEEN MADE TO MOVE OUT TO CAVES HE HAD DISCOVERED IN ANOTHER VALLEY WHICH WOULD MAKE A BETTER HIDE-OUT.
TAKE ALL THE VEHICLES AN' HEAD FOR THE CAVES. THIS SNOW WILL COVER YOUR TRACKS, AN' THERE AIN'T ENOUGH TER GIVE YOU ANY PROBLEMS.
NO SWEAT, BOSS, EVERYTHING'S LOADED UP AN' READY.

BUT HE HAD NO INTENTION OF LEAVING WITHOUT SLOWING UP THE BRITISH AND PUNISHING BRUGEL, A MAN HE CONSIDERED HAD BETRAYED HIM.
YOU GUYS ARE STAYIN' WITH ME. WE'LL CATCH UP WITH THE OTHERS AFTER WE'VE HIT THE LIMEYS!
WE'LL LEAVE THE FAT KRAUT FOR YOU, PETE!

THE AMERICANS WERE VETERAN FIGHTERS, AND THEIR AMBUSH WAS BRUTALLY SUCCESSFUL AS THE INEXPERIENCED ATTACKING FORCE FOUND TO THEIR COST.
HIT 'EM!
NEIN . . . AAAGHHH!
POMPHREY FELL BADLY WOUNDED AND YARDS FROM HIM, BRUGEL BREATHED HIS LAST. HIS SCHEMING HAD BROUGHT ONLY DEATH.

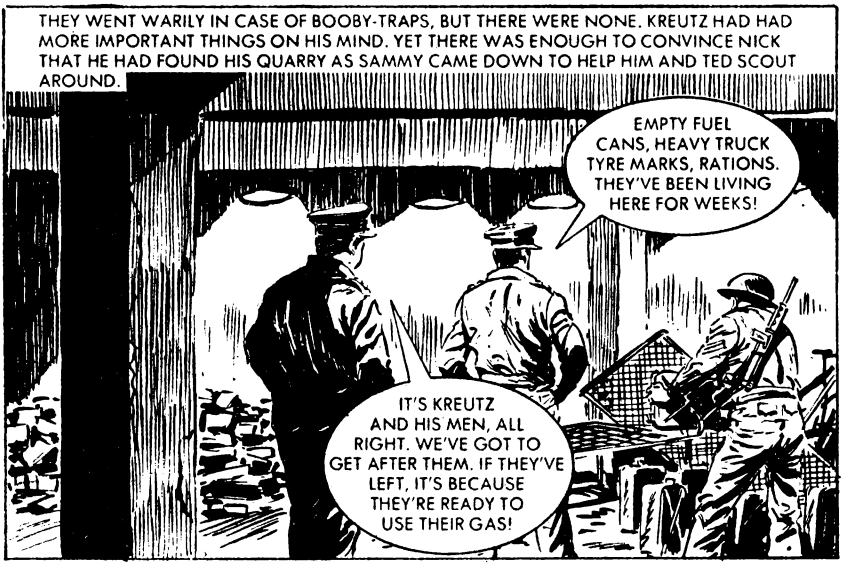
THE SURVIVORS OF POMPHREY'S FORCE DIVED FOR COVER WITH BULLETS WHISTLING AROUND THEM, CUTTING DOWN MORE MEN.
WHAT'S HAPPENING—WHAT DO WE DO NOW?
I DON'T KNOW, MATE, BUT I'M STAYIN' UNDER COVER TILL THE SHOOTIN' STOPS!
SATISFIED THAT THERE WOULD BE NO IMMEDIATE PURSUIT, CRAZY PETE AND HIS MEN WITHDREW TO CATCH UP WITH THE MAIN FORCE.
THE LIMEYS ARE STILL WONDERIN' WHAT HIT 'EM!
BY THE TIME THEY BRING UP THEIR TRUCKS, WE'LL BE SAFE AWAY!
AND OVER IN THE OTHER DIRECTION, NICK HEARD THE DISTANT FIRING. HE URGED SAMMY TO INCREASE SPEED, DESPITE THE SNOW WHICH WAS MAKING DRIVING DIFFICULT.
WE'RE LEAVING THE OTHERS BEHIND.
NEVER MIND, THEY'LL CATCH UP. WE'VE GOT TO HEAD THE JERRIES OFF BEFORE THEY REACH THE PASS OR WE'LL LOSE THEM.

NICK WAS AS YET UNAWARE OF WHAT HAD REALLY HAPPENED TO POMPHREY'S MEN, AND OTHER FAR MORE DANGEROUS MOVES WERE BEING PLANNED AT WOLF-LAIR AS THE IMPATIENT KREUTZ DECIDED TO LOAD UP ALL THE GAS AND MOVE OUT AHEAD OF SCHEDULE AS AN ADDED PRECAUTION.
JA, AND WE CAN EASILY WAIT AT THE TOP OF THE PASS.
IT'S BETTER THAN GETTING STUCK IN THE SNOW, AND WE'VE ENOUGH MEN TO DEFEND THE VEHICLES IF WE ENCOUNTER ANY PATROLS.

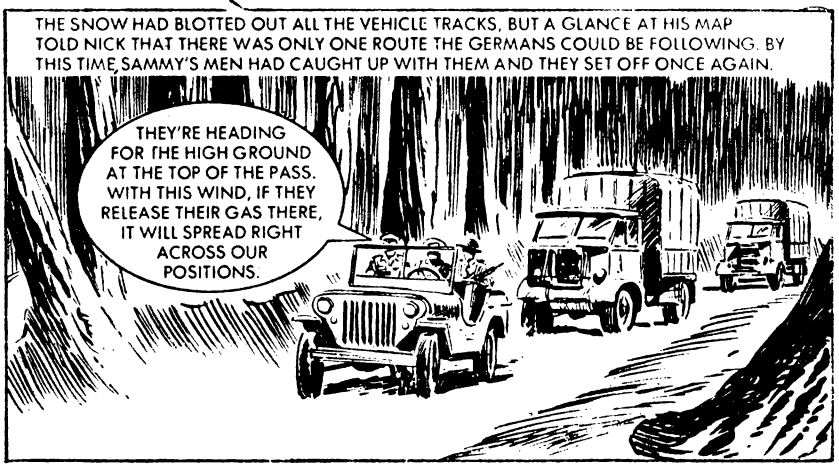

BY THE TIME NICK'S JEEP REACHED WOLF-LAIR, THE SNOW HAD ALMOST HIDDEN THE TRACKS. BUT TED SPOTTED THEM, ALMOST FALLING OUT OF THE VEHICLE IN HIS EAGERNESS.
SIR! SOMEONE'S ON THE TRACK AHEAD OF US. THEY CAME FROM THE RUINS.
WELL SPOTTED, CORPORAL. MAYBE YOU WILL BE OF SOME USE TO US YET . . .

THE REST OF SAMMY'S VEHICLES WERE STILL LAGGING BEHIND, SO NICK HAD PLENTY TIME TO TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT THE TRACKS, AIDED BY TED.
JERRY TRUCKS, SIR, I KNOW THEIR TYRE PATTERNS . . .
THEY COULDN'T HAVE COME FROM THE VALLEY . . . THERE'S NO ROUTE THAT WOULD BRING THEM THROUGH HERE!

LEAVING SAMMY IN THE JEEP, THEY FOLLOWED THE FAINT TRACKS BACK TO THEIR SOURCE. AND NICK WHISTLED SUDDENLY IN ASTONISHMENT—FOR HE HAD SPOTTED A WELL-HIDDEN CONCRETE RAMP LEADING DOWN UNDER THE RUINS.
THEY MUST HAVE BEEN HIDING DOWN HERE ALL THE TIME. EVEN WHEN I CAME HERE WITH JOE . . .
BUT THIS RAMP HAS BEEN CLEARED RECENTLY, SIR . . .
AGAIN NICK HAD TED'S KEEN EYE-SIGHT TO HELP HIM. TELL-TALE SIGNS IN THE SNOW, NOW HALF-OBLITERATED, SHOWED THAT THE RAMP HAD BEEN CAMOUFLAGED VERY THOROUGHLY UNTIL JUST RECENTLY.


THEY WENT WARILY IN CASE OF BOOBY-TRAPS, BUT THERE WERE NONE. KREUTZ HAD HAD MORE IMPORTANT THINGS ON HIS MIND. YET THERE WAS ENOUGH TO CONVINCE NICK THAT HE HAD FOUND HIS QUARRY AS SAMMY CAME DOWN TO HELP HIM AND TED SCOUT AROUND.
EMPTY FUEL CANS, HEAVY TRUCK TYRE MARKS, RATIONS. THEY'VE BEEN LIVING HERE FOR WEEKS!
IT'S KREUTZ AND HIS MEN, ALL RIGHT. WE'VE GOT TO GET AFTER THEM. IF THEY'VE LEFT, IT'S BECAUSE THEY'RE READY TO USE THEIR GAS!

AND AS THEY MOVED BACK UP TO THE SURFACE, IT WAS SAMMY WHO REMEMBERED THE FIRING FROM THE VALLEY—AND WONDERED WHO COULD HAVE BEEN INVOLVED.
IF IT WASN'T KREUTZ, MAYBE THERE ARE SOME MORE JERRIES WHO WERE LEFT BEHIND DURING THE RETREAT.
I'VE GOT A HUNCH IT WAS THE AMERICAN DESERTERS! BUT THAT'S NOT IMPORTANT NOW— THEY CAN WAIT!


THE SNOW HAD BLOTTED OUT ALL THE VEHICLE TRACKS, BUT A GLANCE AT HIS MAP TOLD NICK THAT THERE WAS ONLY ONE ROUTE THE GERMANS COULD BE FOLLOWING. BY THIS TIME, SAMMY'S MEN HAD CAUGHT UP WITH THEM AND THEY SET OFF ONCE AGAIN.
THEY'RE HEADING FOR THE HIGH GROUND AT THE TOP OF THE PASS. WITH THIS WIND, IF THEY RELEASE THEIR GAS THERE, IT WILL SPREAD RIGHT ACROSS OUR POSITIONS.

SOME MILES FURTHER ON IT WAS TED'S KEEN SIGHT WHICH WON HIM A NEW RESPECT FROM NICK AS HE DETECTED MORE TYRE MARKS CURVING DOWN TO JOIN THEIR ROUTE.
MORE TRUCKS, SIR, COMING FROM THAT DIRECTION. THEY CAN'T BE FAR AHEAD OF US, THE MARKS ARE QUITE PLAIN.
IF I'M RIGHT, THAT WILL BE THE YANKS. WE'D HAVE CAUGHT THEM IF WE HADN'T STOPPED AT WOLF-LAIR. I WONDER IF THEY REALISE THERE ARE JERRIES AHEAD OF THEM?

THEY DON'T KNOW IT, BUT THEY'RE THE HAM IN THE SANDWICH. THE JERRIES AHEAD AND US BEHIND!
THEY'LL GET A NASTY SHOCK IF THEY CATCH UP WITH KREUTZ!
AND NICK WAS GLAD THAT SAMMY'S BATTLE-HARDENED TROOPS WERE WITH HIM. HE COULD SENSE SOME TOUGH FIGHTING AHEAD.

MEANWHILE KREUTZ HAD GOT HIS VEHICLES OFF THE TRACK AND ON TO THE HIGH GROUND, AND WAITING PATIENTLY WHEN A SENTRY REPORTED JEEPS APPROACHING.
THEY MIGHT PASS WITHOUT SEEING US . . .
WE CAN'T RISK IT. PREPARE AN AMBUSH, BUT LEAVE SOME SENTRIES WITH THE TRUCKS.

UNAWARE THAT A " WARM WELCOME " AWAITED THEM, THE RENEGADE AMERICANS WERE CONFIDENT THAT THEY HAD LEFT ALL PURSUIT BEHIND, AND HAD EVEN SLOWED A LITTLE TO LET MORETTI AND HIS REARGUARD CATCH UP.
YEAH, HE'S TAILIN' US. I SAW HIS JEEP AS WE CAME ROUND THAT LAST BEND.
ONLY A FEW MILES NOW, AN'WE'LL REACH THE CAVES. SEE ANYTHING OF PETE YET?

SUDDENLY, JUST AS CRAZY PETE'S JEEP CAUGHT UP WITH THE OTHERS, A HAIL OF BULLETS AND GRENADES BROUGHT THE LITTLE CONVOY SCREECHING TO A HALT AS THE HIDDEN GERMANS STRUCK WITH PERFECT TIMING.
AAAGHH!
AMBUSH —HIT THE DECK!

THE AMERICANS WERE DESERTERS BUT THEY WERE NOT COWARDS, AND THE SURVIVORS OF THE FIRST CLASH FOUGHT BACK WITH DESPERATE COURAGE, CLOSING IN WITH THE NAZIS.
OUTA MY WAY . . . AAAGHHH!

BUT CRAZY PETE KNEW THAT THE ODDS WERE HOPELESSLY AGAINST THEM, AND HE INTENDED TO SURVIVE. HE SNARLED AS HIS DRIVER GASPED—
THEY AIN'T LIMEYS, THEY'RE KRAUTS!
YOU WANNA DIE LIKE A HERO? LET'S FADE WHILE THESE SUCKERS BUY US SOME TIME!

THE TWO COMPANIONS WITH MORETTI WERE OF THE SAME BREED. THEY SLIPPED AWAY INTO THE DARKNESS JUST AS THE GERMANS SURGED FORWARD TO MOP UP ANY SURVIVORS, KREUTZ DIRECTING OPERATIONS HIMSELF.
MAKE SURE THERE ARE NO SURVIVORS. WE DON'T WANT THEM SNIPING AT US LATER ON. AND THEN BRING YOUR MEN BACK TO THE VEHICLES.

WHEN NICK HEARD THE FIRING AHEAD, HE AND SAMMY GUESSED AT ONCE WHAT HAD HAPPENED. THEY HALTED THE VEHICLES AND GOT READY TO MOVE AHEAD ON FOOT.

WE'VE A GOOD CHANCE TO TAKE THEM ALL BY SURPRISE NOW. WE'LL CIRCLE ROUND AND MOVE IN ON THEIR FLANK.

IT'S YOUR SHOW, SAMMY, YOU'RE THE EXPERT. I'LL STICK WITH YOU IF YOU'VE NO OBJECTIONS.

AS THEY MOVED OFF, NICK FOUND TIME TO APOLOGISE TO TED FOR HIS EARLIER BAD TEMPER.

YOU WEREN'T TO BLAME ABOUT BRUGEL. BESIDES, IF HE HAD LED US TO THE VALLEY, KREUTZ WOULD HAVE GOT AWAY!

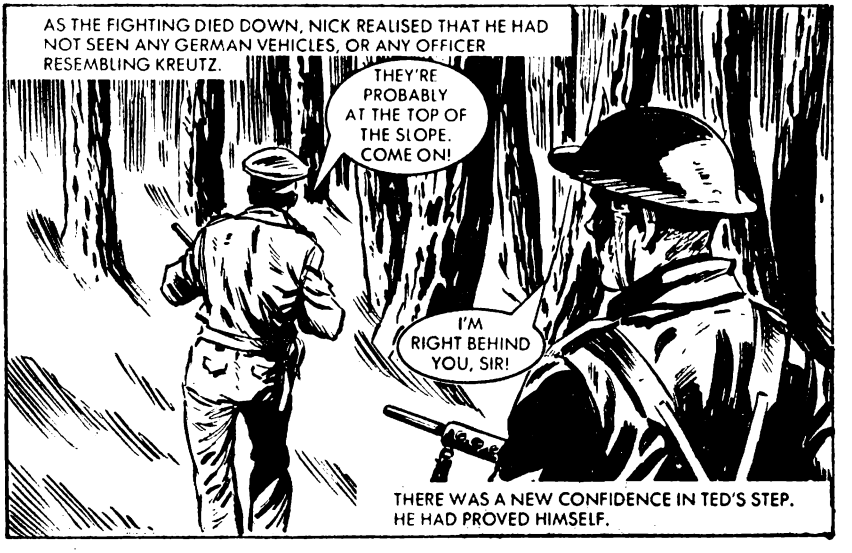
BLIMEY, SIR, I HADN'T THOUGHT OF THAT!

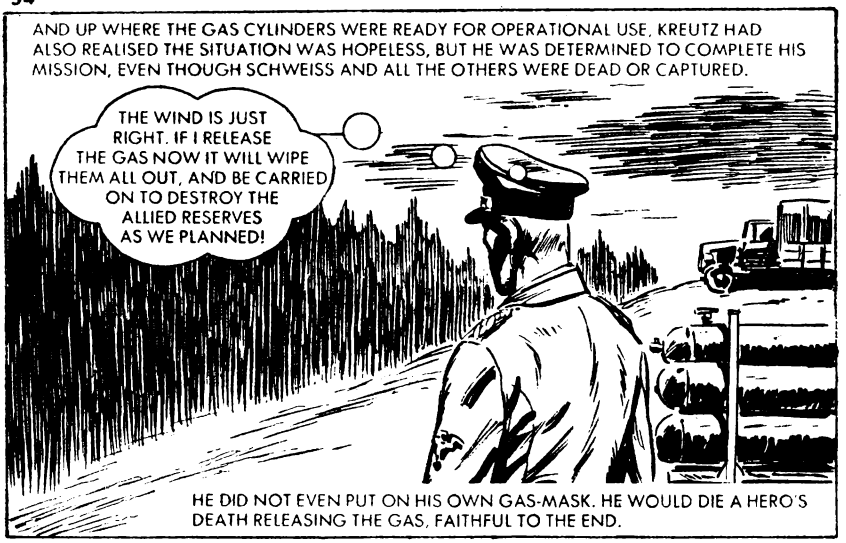
AND WHEN THEY MOVED IN STEALTHILY FROM THE FLANK, SAMMY'S FORCE TOOK THE REMAINING GERMANS AT THE AMBUSH SITE BY SURPRISE.

CHARGE!

HIMMEL . . . AAAGHHH!

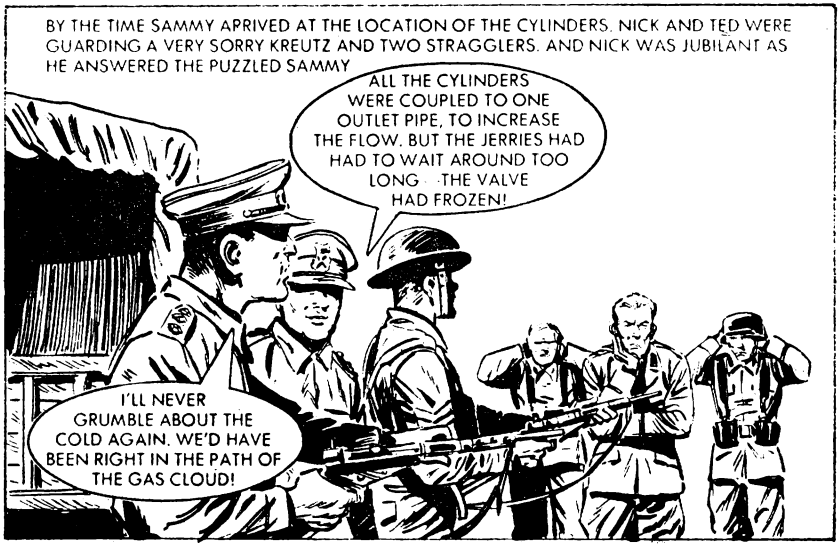
SOME OF THE S.S. SURRENDERED, BUT MOST OF THEM PREFERRED TO FIGHT TO THE FINISH—AND SAMMY'S VETERANS DID NOT OBJECT TO THAT.
SCHWEIN . . . AAGHHH!
NEVER KNEW WHEN YOU'RE BEAT, DO YOU!


AS THE FIGHTING DIED DOWN, NICK REALISED THAT HE HAD NOT SEEN ANY GERMAN VEHICLES, OR ANY OFFICER RESEMBLING KREUTZ.
THEY'RE PROBABLY AT THE TOP OF THE SLOPE. COME ON!
I'M RIGHT BEHIND YOU, SIR!
THERE WAS A NEW CONFIDENCE IN TED'S STEP. HE HAD PROVED HIMSELF.


AND UP WHERE THE GAS CYLINDERS WERE READY FOR OPERATIONAL USE, KREUTZ HAD ALSO REALISED THE SITUATION WAS HOPELESS, BUT HE WAS DETERMINED TO COMPLETE HIS MISSION, EVEN THOUGH SCHWEISS AND ALL THE OTHERS WERE DEAD OR CAPTURED.
THE WIND IS JUST RIGHT. IF I RELEASE THE GAS NOW IT WILL WIPE THEM ALL OUT, AND BE CARRIED ON TO DESTROY THE ALLIED RESERVES AS WE PLANNED!
HE DID NOT EVEN PUT ON HIS OWN GAS-MASK. HE WOULD DIE A HERO'S DEATH RELEASING THE GAS, FAITHFUL TO THE END.

NICK AND TED BREATHLESSLY REACHED THE TOP IN TIME TO SEE KREUTZ REACHING FOR THE WHEEL WHICH OPERATED THE VALVE WHICH WOULD LET CLOUD UPON CLOUD OF THE KILLER GAS FLOAT OVER THE ALLIED LINES.
THE WIND, SIR, IT'S BLOWING STRAIGHT TOWARDS US!
DON'T SHOOT, YOU MIGHT PUNCTURE THE CYLINDERS!

STUMBLING FORWARD, HAMPERED BY THE THICK, DEEP SNOW, NICK REALISED HE WOULD NEVER REACH THE NAZI IN TIME AND KREUTZ SNEERED WHEN HE AT LAST LOOKED UP, HIS HAND CLOSED AROUND THE VALVE WHEEL.
TOO LATE, ENGLANDER, ONCE THE VALVE IS OPEN IT CANNOT BE SHUT AGAIN!
I SHOULD HAVE LET TED SHOOT. MY MAGAZINE IS EMPTY . . .
BUT TO HIS SURPRISE HE REACHED THE GERMAN WITHOUT BEING OVERCOME BY THE GAS. HE LASHED OUT STRONGLY —
THE VALVE . . .AAGHH!
HANDS OFF!

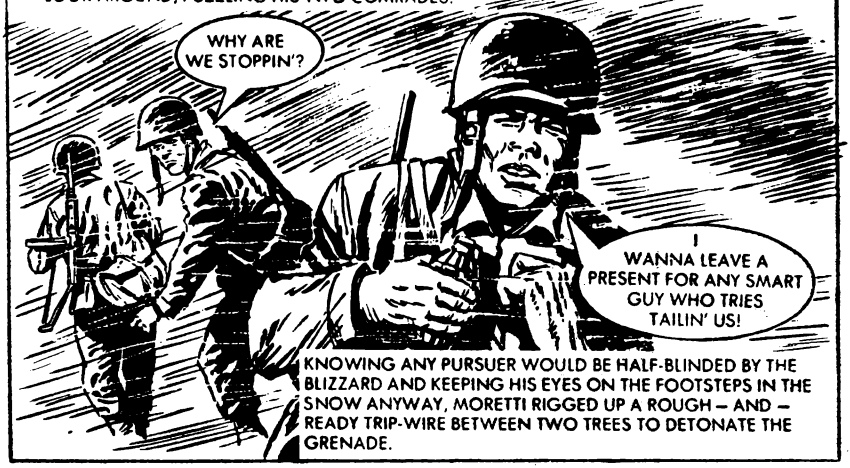

BY THE TIME SAMMY APRIVED AT THE LOCATION OF THE CYLINDERS. NICK AND TED WERE GUARDING A VERY SORRY KREUTZ AND TWO STRAGGLERS. AND NICK WAS JUBILANT AS HE ANSWERED THE PUZZLED SAMMY
ALL THE CYLINDERS WERE COUPLED TO ONE OUTLET PIPE, TO INCREASE THE FLOW. BUT THE JERRIES HAD HAD TO WAIT AROUND TOO LONG - THE VALVE HAD FROZEN!
I'LL NEVER GRUMBLE ABOUT THE COLD AGAIN. WE'D HAVE BEEN RIGHT IN THE PATH OF THE GAS CLOUD!

LEAVING SAMMY AND HIS MEN TO TAKE OVER, NICK AND TED WENT DOWN TO LOOK FOR CRAZY PETE'S BODY AT THE AMBUSH.
HE'S NOT HERE! HE MIGHT HAVE GOT AWAY . . .
LOOK, SIR. FAINT TRACKS. THE SNOW HASN'T QUITE COVERED 'EM.

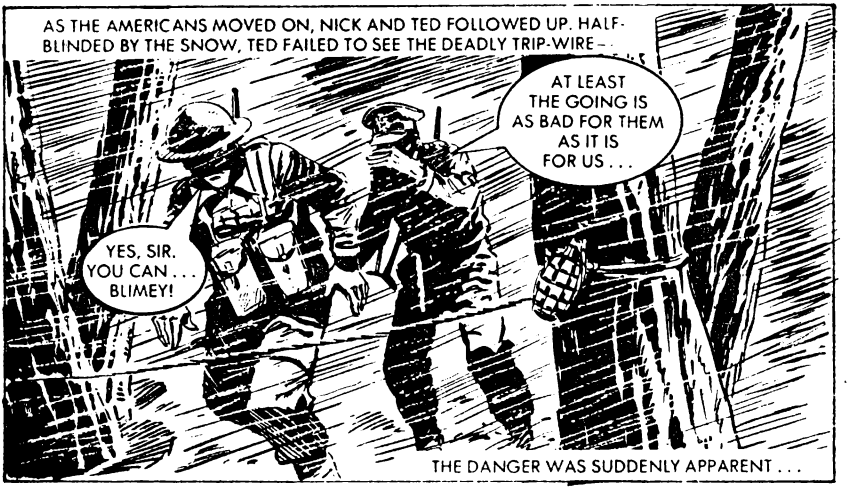
THERE SEEMED LITTLE HOPE OF FOLLOWING THE FAINT TRAIL, BUT TED OFFERED TO TRY, PROUDLY EXPLAINING HIS SKILL.
I WAS BROUGHT UP IN THE COUNTRY, SIR, AN' I WAS A FAIR POACHER.
GET CRACKING THEN. THERE ISN'T TIME TO COLLECT ANYONE ELSE.

IN A FEW MOMENTS THE SNOW BEGAN TO FALL MORE FIERCELY, DRIVING INTO THEIR FACES. SOON IT HAD BLOTTED OUT THE WRECKED VEHICLES, BUT TED STILL PLODDED STEADILY ON INTO THE BLIZZARD, AS NICK STUMBLED ALONG BEHIND.

ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT KNOW FOR SURE THAT HE WAS BEING FOLLOWED, CRAZY PETE ALSO HAD A HUNTER'S INSTINCTS. HE PULLED OUT A GRENADE, PAUSING TO LOOK AROUND, PUZZLING HIS TWO COMRADES.

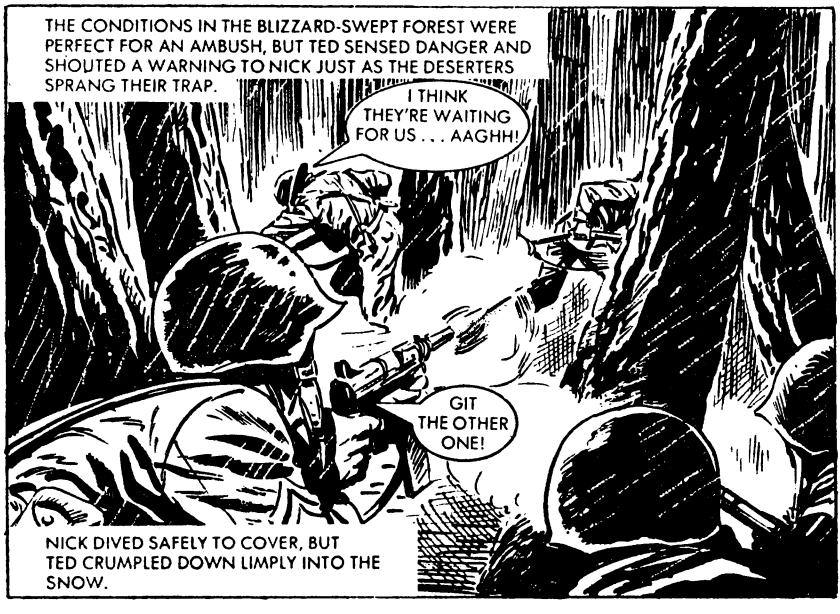


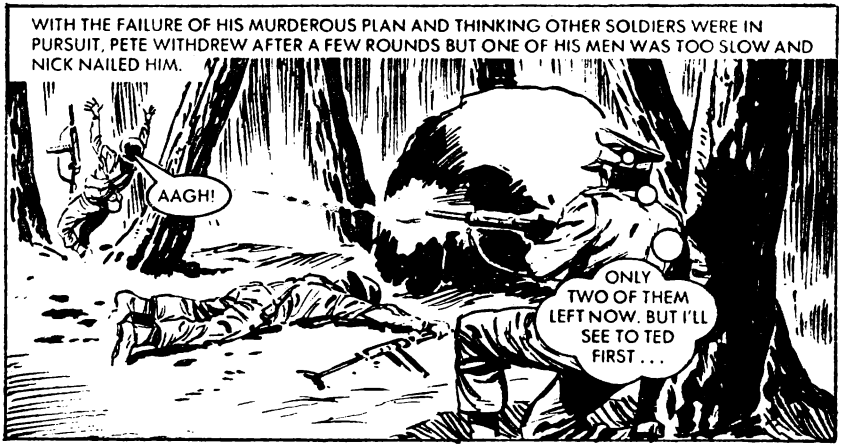
KNOWING ANY PURSUER WOULD BE HALF-BLINDED BY THE BLIZZARD AND KEEPING HIS EYES ON THE FOOTSTEPS IN THE SNOW ANYWAY, MORETTI RIGGED UP A ROUGH – AND – READY TRIP-WIRE BETWEEN TWO TREES TO DETONATE THE GRENADE.


AS THE AMERICANS MOVED ON, NICK AND TED FOLLOWED UP. HALF-BLINDED BY THE SNOW, TED FAILED TO SEE THE DEADLY TRIP-WIRE . . .
AT LEAST THE GOING IS AS BAD FOR THEM AS IT IS FOR US . . .
YES, SIR. YOU CAN . . . BLIMEY!
THE DANGER WAS SUDDENLY APPARENT . . .

. . . AND TED WAS NORMALLY A SLOW THINKER, BUT HE COULD ACT FAST WHEN THE SITUATION WAS URGENT ENOUGH . . . AND NOW HE BOWLED NICK SWIFTY INTO THE SNOW.
GET DOWN, SIR— GRENADE!
FORTUNATELY MORETTI HAD NOT HAD TIME TO SHORTEN THE GRENADE FUSE. THE BRIEF DELAY, COUPLED WITH TED'S SWIFT ACTION, SAVED THEIR LIVES.

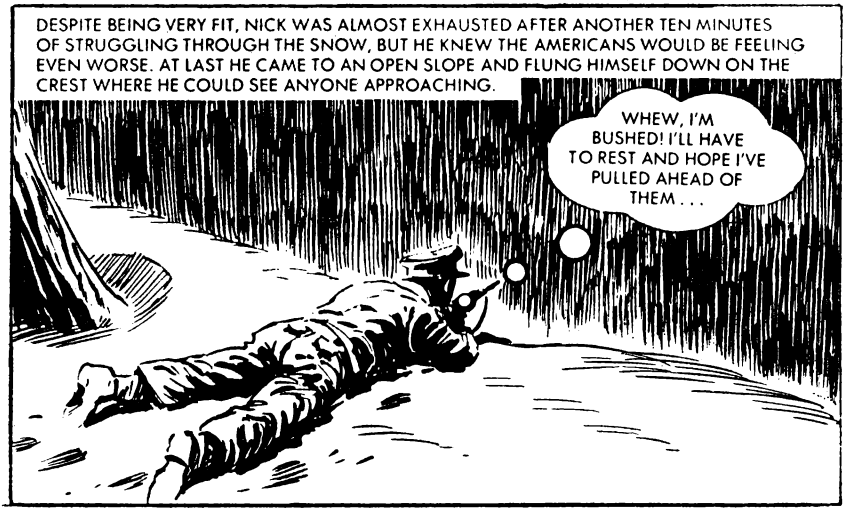
UP AHEAD, CRAZY PETE HEARD THE DISTANT BOOMING EXPLOSION. NOW HE REALLY KNEW THAT HE WAS BEING PURSUED, AND HE COULDN'T COUNT ON THE FACT THAT THE GRENADE HAD GOT ALL OR ANY OF THE MEN ON HIS TRAIL.
THEY'RE AFTER US—WE GOTTA MOVE FASTER!
THAT'S JUST WHAT THEY'LL FIGURE. SO WE STAY HERE AN' WAIT FOR 'EM!


THE CONDITIONS IN THE BLIZZARD-SWEPT FOREST WERE PERFECT FOR AN AMBUSH, BUT TED SENSED DANGER AND SHOUTED A WARNING TO NICK JUST AS THE DESERTERS SPRANG THEIR TRAP.
I THINK THEY'RE WAITING FOR US . . . AAGHH!
GIT THE OTHER ONE!
NICK DIVED SAFELY TO COVER, BUT TED CRUMPLED DOWN LIMPLY INTO THE SNOW.


WITH THE FAILURE OF HIS MURDEROUS PLAN AND THINKING OTHER SOLDIERS WERE IN PURSUIT, PETE WITHDREW AFTER A FEW ROUNDS BUT ONE OF HIS MEN WAS TOO SLOW AND NICK NAILED HIM.
AAGH!
ONLY TWO OF THEM LEFT NOW. BUT I'LL SEE TO TED FIRST . . .

AND TED INSISTED HE'D BE OK LEFT ON HIS OWN—
I'LL JUST FIX YOUR FIELD DRESSING . . .
NO, SIR, GET AFTER EM. YOUR ONLY HOPE NOW IS TO GET AHEAD OF 'EM!

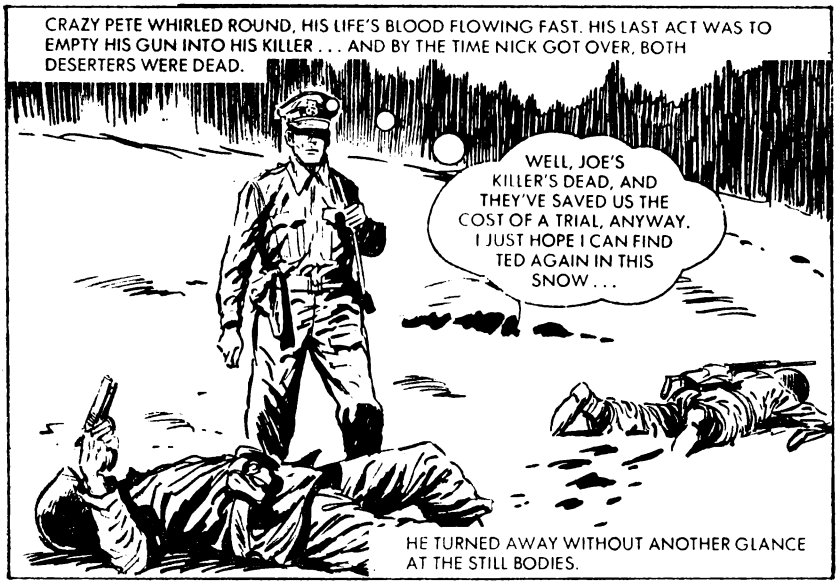
IT WAS SOUND ADVICE AND NICK SLIPPED OUT TO ONE FLANK. HE KNEW THE AMERICANS WOULD BE ALERT FOR ANY SIGN OF PURSUIT AND MIGHT SET MORE BOOBY-TRAPS OR AMBUSHES.
I MIGHT CATCH 'EM IF THEY DELAY TO PLANT ANY MORE GRENADES . . .


DESPITE BEING VERY FIT, NICK WAS ALMOST EXHAUSTED AFTER ANOTHER TEN MINUTES OF STRUGGLING THROUGH THE SNOW, BUT HE KNEW THE AMERICANS WOULD BE FEELING EVEN WORSE. AT LAST HE CAME TO AN OPEN SLOPE AND FLUNG HIMSELF DOWN ON THE CREST WHERE HE COULD SEE ANYONE APPROACHING.
WHEW, I'M BUSHED! I'LL HAVE TO REST AND HOPE I'VE PULLED AHEAD OF THEM . . .

AS THE MINUTES PASSED HE FELT CERTAIN HE HAD MISSED THEM. THEN HIS PULSE QUICKENED AS HE SAW TWO STUMBLING FIGURES COME LURCHING OUT FROM AMONG THE TREES.
IT'S THEM -- MORETTI AND A HENCHMAN . . .
BUT HE HESITATED, HIS FINGER ON THE TRIGGER, UNWILLING TO KILL EVEN THOSE TWO SAVAGE MURDERERS IN COLD BLOOD.

BUT THEN MORETTI'S COMPANION SLIPPED TO THE GROUND, CRIPPLED BY AN ANKLE HE HAD TWISTED IN A FALL. HE COULD GO NO FURTHER—
PETE, MY ANKLE—WE GOTTA STOP . . .
AND WASTE MORE TIME? NO THANKS, PAL. YOU'LL BE FROZEN STIFF AS A BOARD BEFORE THE LIMEYS FIND YOU . . .
HE CALLOUSLY SNATCHED UP THE INJURED MAN'S SUB-MACHINE GUN.

BUT AS CRAZY PETE TURNED SELFISHLY AWAY, IGNORING THE PLEAS OF HIS EXHAUSTED COMPANION, THE OTHER AMERICAN PULLED OUT A HEAVY REVOLVER AND ANGRILY FIRED.
YOU YELLER RAT, YOU AIN'T GOIN' ANYWHERE!


CRAZY PETE WHIRLED ROUND, HIS LIFE'S BLOOD FLOWING FAST. HIS LAST ACT WAS TO EMPTY HIS GUN INTO HIS KILLER . . . AND BY THE TIME NICK GOT OVER, BOTH DESERTERS WERE DEAD.
WELL, JOE'S KILLER'S DEAD, AND THEY'VE SAVED US THE COST OF A TRIAL, ANYWAY. I JUST HOPE I CAN FIND TED AGAIN IN THIS SNOW . . .
HE TURNED AWAY WITHOUT ANOTHER GLANCE AT THE STILL BODIES.

FORTUNATELY THE WIND HAD DIED DOWN BY NOW, AND TED HAD THE BRIGHT IDEA OF FIRING SHOTS AT REGULAR INTERVALS TO GUIDE NICK TO HIM.
IF I HADN'T HEARD YOUR SHOTS, I WOULD HAVE MISSED YOU . . .
LOOKS AS IF THEY'VE BROUGHT US MORE COMPANY, SIR. IT'S CAPTAIN KNIGHT AND SOME OF HIS MEN!

WHEN THEY RETURNED BACK AT TOWN, BRINGING IN THE WOUNDED POMPHREY AND HIS SURVIVING MEN, THEY FOUND COLONEL JENKINS HAD ARRIVED WITH SOME GOOD NEWS.
THE GERMAN COUNTER-ATTACK HAS FAILED. BUT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN A DIFFERENT STORY IF KREUTZ HAD USED THAT GAS!
I'LL TELL POMPHREY. IT MIGHT CHEER HIM UP IN HOSPITAL!

FOR NICK THERE WAS A SPELL OF LEAVE AND PROMOTION TO CAPTAIN BEFORE HIS NEXT JOB.
WHEN YOU GET BACK I'LL TRY TO FIND YOU ANOTHER N.C.O. — A GOOD SERGEANT YOU CAN RELY ON.
I'VE GOT ONE, SIR, IF YOU GIVE HIM ANOTHER STRIPE WHEN HE GETS OUT OF HOSPITAL. CORPORAL TED HODGE!

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